

CHRISTIANITY
AND THE
MODERN MIND
SAMUEL MCCOMB



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Christianity and the Modern Mind

CHRISTIANITY AND THE MODERN MIND

BY

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TO
MY WIFE

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

PREFATORY NOTE

THE substance of a portion of this book has already appeared in print—Chapters I and III in the *Contemporary Review*, Chapter VI in the *Century Magazine*, Chapters VIII and IX in the *London Quarterly Review*. All this material has been carefully revised and in part rewritten for the present volume. The remainder of the book appears now for the first time.

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INTRODUCTION

It is a hard task for any man to estimate the spiritual tendencies of his own generation. There are so many currents and cross currents, and he himself is so deeply affected by them, that he cannot get a detached and dispassionate view, and hence is liable to mistake a mere temporary eddy for a strong and steady movement. Still he can learn something of the course of things, by noting the subjects which interest the circles to which he belongs, and by conference with persons of different grades of culture with whom he may be brought into contact. Judging in this way, I venture to believe that we are about to witness a great revival of interest in the spiritual and ideal aspects of life, and more especially in religion as a shaping, guiding, reconciling force in the individual and in society. One phenomenon of our time is

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especially striking. It is the spectacle of thousands of persons who want to believe but can find no help in the traditions of the churches. All their instincts are on the side of religion, yet the religion of their youth seems powerless to cope with their maturer experiences. They believe that there is a great secret in religion, a secret of unspeakable blessedness, of victory over the discouragements and sorrows which the world inflicts on them; but it has escaped them and they would fain find it. They long to be pure, to have inward peace and unity. They long for redemption from slavery to the lower things of the world, for entrance into a higher order of existence. They are groping for some hand that will lead them out of darkness into light. Too often these persons secede from the great historic churches, which seem to them to be preoccupied with other affairs and to be lacking in spiritual warmth and effectiveness. No doubt, to some extent this unsettlement is owing to

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supposed injuries inflicted on traditional religion by modern criticism and natural science. Intelligent laymen know, in a vague way, that criticism has shaken the very foundations of traditional teaching about the Bible; that the scientific conception of the world has revolutionized beliefs supposed to be essential to religion; that the great doctrines of God, of Christ, of sin, and of immortality are the subject of strenuous debate. And they ask earnestly—Allowing for everything that modern knowledge can take from us, what is left as a solid basis for faith when science and criticism have done their worst or their best? Can we still pray and believe and hope without at the same time forfeiting our right to exercise rational thought? If religion is not to evaporate into superstition for the unthinking, some attempt must be made to answer these questions. These pages are meant to be a contribution in this direction. Emphasis is laid on results rather than on the methods by which the results are won,

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partly because of the limitations of space, and partly because any real insight into the processes can be gained only by long discipline and training. Here my function, if humble, is none the less honourable. It is that of a kind of theological middleman, who would mediate to thoughtful but non-academic persons the main conclusions about the origin and meaning of the Christian religion, to which the general body of scholars have come or are coming. Hence my aim is not critical, but positive and constructive. There are signs that mere criticism is losing its interest for thoughtful minds within the Church. This has come about partly because criticism has largely done its work—a great and noble and necessary work—and partly because the human soul cannot permanently live by criticism alone, but ever seeks to go beyond it in search of something to which criticism is a mere preliminary. Hence there is a craving to-day for a richer, a more positive exposition of the great truths of Christianity than

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has been the custom for some time; and, because the Church does not always satisfy this desire, many are leaving its fellowship. But perhaps the most serious aspect of the present situation is the belief of many that the Church is not only intellectually but spiritually bankrupt, that she can bring no healing or reconciling word to the distracted souls of men. The modern man will accept no Church, however venerable its pedigree, however lofty its pretensions, if it cannot justify its existence by contributing to life. In truth, he does not know what to do with ideas that cannot be translated into some kind of experience. The dogmas of the Church, however apparently bound up through long association with the very existence of religion, cease to interest him unless they can be shown to have a meaning for life. We may or may not deplore this tendency. Whether we do so or not, we must relate ourselves to it. But should we deplore it? Was not Christianity a life before it became a

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creed? Must not its most convincing evidence be found in its effects, in what it actually can *do*? In the Golden Age of Christian faith, the age of apostles and martyrs, religion seemed to men to be above all things, “power,” power to recreate the soul, to heal the wounds of body and of mind, to lift the sinner and the outcast into the freedom of the children of God. In these pages I have tried to show how our belief in God, in Jesus Christ, in a life beyond the grave, has a meaning for us here and now and bears vitally upon our earthly fate. The crowning need of the hour is for men who will do for religious truth what Socrates did for philosophy—bring it down from the clouds and make it minister to the commonplace needs of plain men and women. Martineau has somewhere said that we require the constraint of the loftiest motives in order to discharge the most humdrum duties; so I believe only God himself can wipe away our tears and ease us of the burdens of our lot and lift us above

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the sordid miseries with which we are surrounded. It is through this gate that the religion of Jesus Christ seems likely to enter anew the soul of our age and free men from the shackles which have too long bound them. No man need despair of the age. Constantly do we hear of new "movements"; and movement is a sign of life. Pragmatism, which aims at conceiving truth in terms of life; the great Modernist movement within the Church of Rome, driven for the moment underground, but destined to reappear with renewed vigour; the newer Biblical Scholarship, which seeks to pierce beneath the transitory to the permanent elements in revelation; the Psychical Research movement, which would not only believe but know that man is heir to immortality; the rise of Spiritual Healing in its various forms, now sane, rational, and grounded on historic Christianity, and, again, insane, irrational, and divorced from the main stream of Christian tradition; Socialism, with its passion for

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men, its longing for a new earth; the new Evangelism, with its passion for men in their spiritual and eternal relations and its new-found emphasis on the ethical side of religion—all these stirrings of the human spirit testify that God is still in the world and that many are feeling His high visitation.

CHAPTER I

THE INTELLECT IN RELIGION

THE sad fate which overtakes words is nowhere more painfully illustrated than in the history of the word "dogma." It was originally used in the Greek and Roman philosophic schools to express a personal conviction of an individual thinker, not only about purely intellectual problems, but also about ethical principles and motives to conduct. Dogma was then a man's deepest belief. Gradually, however, it lost this personal reference and was applied to propositions supposed to be universally valid and eternally true. It was this meaning that the word took on in the history of Christian theology. Dogma was a formulated statement of Divine truth supernaturally revealed and imposed by ecclesiastical authority. To-day we live in a world which has thrown off the bonds

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of authority, and with them all dogmas, whether religious, philosophical, political, or social. The adjectives with which the word usually keeps company are significant of the popular feeling. Dogmas are "dead or dying." They are "obsolete or out-worn." They belong to a "pre-critical" stage of thought. "Away with dogma!" cries the pulpit, echoed by the pew. "Give us the simple Gospel of Jesus in its purity and freshness, uncontaminated by theological theories that only darken and repel!" And the conception here rudely and crudely enunciated has found powerful expression and splendid exposition at the hands of a German school that has much to say of the Gospel, while it puts dogma under the ban. It is a most depressing reflection that two of the finest prophetic spirits of the nineteenth century arrived at diametrically opposite conclusions in the matter under discussion. Martineau preached an undogmatic Christianity, a spiritualised and Christianised theism.

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Newman knew no time when religion presented itself to him in any guise save that of dogma. The former charged the latter with want of immediateness of religious vision, with failure to pierce to the primitive roots of faith, where, apart from any obstructing media, the Divine and human mingle. The Catholic, on the other hand, could scarce detect in the face of the Unitarian even a fugitive gleam of Christian light. Clearly, it is an urgent task to endeavour to clear up the relations of dogma and religion, to define the rights and value of theology for the Church and the individual, and to investigate whether indeed it is, as some imagine, not a living branch of the tree of knowledge, but a dead excrescence and, therefore, of no permanent value for the spiritual life of humanity.

What, then, is dogma in the genuine sense? It is not merely identical with truth which claims to be believed, for in this sense it is

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clear that all thinking men, whether they call themselves dogmatists or anti-dogmatists, have dogmas. Emerson and Carlyle are theologically most undogmatic; yet the calm and serene optimism of the one, the troubled and turbulent pessimism of the other, rest on dogma backed up by the sternest sanctions. But these great modern preachers insist that their dogmas are verifiable in experience, that every man can see their proof writ large in history and life; whereas, by theology, we are often asked to yield a blind assent to principles which are not open to verification and which appeal for their sanction to ecclesiastical decisions. An analysis of the notion of dogma will show that it contains three elements. In the first place, there is the spiritual experience out of which the dogma arises. This experience is the mystical soul of all religion and is possible only through a revelation of God in the soul. The prophet is overwhelmed by the vision of God. His soul is stirred to its depths and he must

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tell to others the things he has seen and heard. Here we have the second factor in the process. He must express what he has experienced in the intellectual forms of his age and place. Hence dogma can lay no claim to infallibility, because it is not the absolute and unadulterated reality. Rather is it a reality refracted and coloured by the human media of reflection, reason, elaboration, through which it passes. Religious intuition grasps truth as a concrete whole. Dogmatic reflection analyses it, dissects it into its component parts, and seeks to show the links of connection, the inner consistency that binds them into unity. Now in this process of reflection a certain element is lost—the infinitude in which the experience of faith lives, moves, and has its being. The logical forms of the understanding break up this infinitude and limit it, giving us only a number of abstractions which are distinct, the one from the other. Hence, from the nature of the case, dogma is imperfect, fragmentary,

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and relative. Religious intuition becomes dim, distorted, takes on the hues of feeling and thinking of the inescapable moral consciousness of a given period. Hence it is that in each age the moulds in which Divine truth has been run, in Paul's words, "the earthly vessels which bear the heavenly treasure," must be broken, that new ones may be formed more worthy of its imperishable worth.

The third element in the notion of dogma is that of authority. There is a widespread idea that religious truth differs from all other kinds of truth in that it appeals for its credentials, not to reason taken in its general philosophical sense, but to authority. The Roman Catholic appeals to the Church; the High Anglican to the Bible as interpreted by the primitive Church; the Evangelical to the *ipsissima verba* of the sacred writings. These theories at bottom are, paradoxical as it may seem, sceptical on the one hand of the inherent sovereignty and convincing en-

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ergy of Divine truth, and on the other of the moral reason of man. And yet theology must appeal to reason, taken, as has been intimated, not in the narrow sense of the discursive understanding, but as expressing the totality of man's spiritual powers. "For," says Bishop Butler, "reason is indeed the only faculty we have wherewith to judge concerning anything, even religion itself."

But in thus robbing dogmas of all external supports, of all claims to infallibility, do we therefore deprive it of authority? By no means. It has not, indeed, the authority of a scientific generalisation or of a proposition of Euclid, which has but to be studied and grasped to gain the consent of all rational beings. To crave for such a coercive function in religion is the last infirmity of the theological mind. For it is only in the lower and less important spheres of truth that demonstrative certainty is gained; the higher we go the more our certainty

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depends on our apprehension of our moral and spiritual needs and on our attitude towards the objects of faith. Genuine dogma, then, is clothed in *moral* certainty. Its appeal is ethical. Its word is—"He that is of the truth heareth My voice." The Divine revelation, the unveiling of God's will and purpose, is not something fixed in strict and rigid outline, to be imposed on the intellect by ecclesiastical or any other authority. It is a living process, whose grandest products may be found in Holy Scripture, a process which for us culminates in the person and work of Christ, who offers Himself to each succeeding age for fresh interpretation, for the unfolding of the unsearchable riches of His Spirit.

But, it may be said, in thus depriving dogma of all authority from without and simply leaving it alone with the individual consciousness, are you not cutting religion loose from its moorings and sending it adrift on a boundless sea of speculation, doubt, and

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uncertainty? Is there no criterion, no court of appeal by which this or that doctrine can have its claims tested, approved, or disapproved? If there be no such tribunal, scepticism is as justifiable as faith, and religion resolves itself into a play of subjective individualistic fancies which have no foundation in reality. All past attempts to discover such a standard have in our age utterly broken down. For centuries men believed that the Church was an infallible authority, but at the Reformation the conscience of Europe broke with this theory. In its place the Bible was exalted as the only infallible rule of faith and practice, but the doctrine was never logically realised; for, when it was discovered that there was no uniform understanding of the Biblical contents, creeds and confessions were formulated which as standards of dogmatic truth took the place of Scripture. And these creeds and confessions in many of their details imply a theory of revelation no longer held by Christian divines. In the eighteenth

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century the ultimate criterion of doctrine was found in reason of the logical understanding. In the hands of Toland, Tindal, Collins, and their followers, Christianity was not so much explained as explained away. It became a mere republication of what was as old as creation. The question, then, before the Church to-day is: Where shall we find a genuine doctrinal standard? The problem, if frankly faced, can admit of one solution only. It is in the Christian consciousness of the individual and of the age that the court of appeal is to be found. In other words, the ultimate standard is the religious consciousness in which all men have a share, enlightened, moulded, penetrated, and shaped by the teaching of Christ in the Gospels, in the history of the Church, and in the illuminating influence of His Spirit. Each age has its own vision of Christ. In the ultimate analysis it is by this vision that all things must be tried. It represents the best conclusions of the age as to the contents of the Bible, the

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meaning of the world and of life; and, while its decisions are not final in the sense that posterity may not advance beyond them, they are for us the measure of our apprehension of the truth. Christ grows in the individual soul. He also grows in the soul of an age. Centuries, as they pass, unfold in ever-increasing richness the ideal significance of His person. "Our ideal," as Emerson says, "is a flying one." The goal ever recedes as we advance. Before His bar all dogmas must be arraigned. Whatever bears His criticism justifies its right to be. Whatever shrinks from before His eye, though it has grown old in the service of human thought, is doomed to death.

The great ideal systems which fascinated earlier ages have but little attraction for us to-day. Our age is nothing if not pragmatic, and it asks of an alleged truth—What can it do? Of what use is it for human life? "Truth," says Mr. F. C. S. Schiller, "which will not or cannot submit to verification is

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not yet truth at all. Its truth is at best potential. Its meaning is null or unintelligible, or at most, conjectural, or dependent on an unfulfilled condition. To become really true it has to be tested by being applied. . . . Hence all real truths must have shown themselves to be useful; they must have been applied to some problem of actual knowing, by usefulness in which they were tested and verified.”¹ Now Christianity asks to be tested by its working. Any element in Christian theology which cannot be verified does not belong to the essence of the religion. How, then, does it fare with the idea of the Incarnation, God’s unique revelation of His character in Christ? Does not this doctrine stand the pragmatic test and prove itself truth by the mighty things it has achieved in history? It is not too much to say that it has wrought a trans-valuation in the moral and spiritual realm. Wherever it has been believed man has become a new being to

¹ *Studies in Humanism*, p. 8.

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himself. The outcast, the slave, the criminal, the poverty-stricken, all have felt its uplifting influence. The most enduring philanthropies have sprung from a belief in the Divine philanthropy revealed in Christ.

The way is now clear for the discussion of our second question: What is the Relation of Theology to Religion? The confounding of one with the other has been a fruitful source of mischief during the entire history of the Church. The holy intuitions of religion have, as it were, overleaped their limits and covered with their authority dogmas born of an undisciplined imagination or of an overweening intellectualism. We are suffering to-day from a reaction against this tendency. A young and able German divine has recently said that Jesus came "to save us from the theologians."¹ There is a sense in which this is true; but there is another sense

¹ Wernle: *Beginnings of Christianity*.

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in which it appears to be only a barren paradox. Jesus saves us from one type of theology by substituting for it a loftier and more adequate type. His method is not the method of the schools. All His teaching as to God and man and human destiny is not a conglomerate of independent maxims, but is based on great organising ideas. Dr. Harnack, who is prone to regard the history of theology as a kind of progressive disease in the Church, is yet compelled to admit that "the Gospel is doctrine in so far as it proclaims the reality of God as Father." But how can we be in earnest with the idea of the Divine Fatherhood if we cut it off from everything that makes it intelligible and credible? The Gospel, it is true, says to every man, "You can claim God as your Father." But if this saying should exhaust its content, would not the message hang in the air an alien element intruded into a world that knows it not? The Fatherhood of God—this is the kernel of Christ's message; and

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truly many a pious soul may take the truth home to itself without fully realising all that lies folded within it, may feel the impact of the Divine grace and love without knowing any need to raise in answer the problems arising out of such a wonderful experience. But the spirit awakened to self-reflection cannot but realise that, unless the message is to work only in the region of emotion and fantasy, and never pour its vital currents into all the channels of the spiritual life, questions emerge that will not be silenced. You say "God is Father"; but I live in a world which in moments of despair I am tempted to call blind and brutal. How does God stand related to this world? I must bring into relation the facts of science and knowledge with the dictates of my religious consciousness. The truth is that, whether he wills or no, every man who is conscious of a religious feeling is a theologian. What Professor Paulsen says of Philosophy is equally valid here: "Philosophy is not a

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matter which we may or may not have. In a certain sense, every man who raises himself above the brutishness of the animal life has a philosophy. The only question is, What kind of philosophy has he? Is it one rudely put together out of some accidental fragments of knowledge and disjointed notions, or is it one thought out and based on a full-orbed view of reality? ”¹

Whence, then, the popular outcry against dogma; the formula with which our time is so familiar,—“ Back to Christ! ”, the demand to go behind creeds and theological systems to the informal teaching of the Sermon on the Mount or the Parable of the Prodigal Son? It is here that the popular consciousness has a relative justification. As we have said, dogma is not religion. Theology is not faith. “ Not the astronomical system,” says Schleiermacher, “ but the glance directed to the highest heaven is the most appropriate symbol of religious contempla-

¹ *Einleitung in die Philosophie.*

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tion.” To the ordinary mind, dogma seems hard, rigid, stationary, whereas it is really something fluid, vital, and inextricably involved in the deepest elements of the religious consciousness. And if one form of theological reflection be found unworthy of the great moments of Christian experience, it does not follow that a nobler and more spiritual one may not be found, or that into the old form a new content may not be poured. It would be easy to show that there is not a single article of the Apostles’ Creed which has for the modern Christian the meaning it had when originally formulated; and it may be doubted whether any two persons interpret the Creed in exactly the same way. “I see,” says Auguste Sabatier, “a large assembly gathered in one of our churches for worship. In this assembly some are poor old women, very ignorant, and some superstitious; some men of middle class, possessing some tincture of literature; some are wise men and philoso-

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phers who have meditated on Kant and Hegel, and even professors of theology who are penetrated to the marrow with the spirit of criticism. All of these bow down their hearts and worship; all speak the same tongue, learned in childhood; all repeat with heart and lip, 'I believe in God the Father Almighty.' Is there on earth a sight more touching or anything nearer to Heaven? . . . But do you suppose that the word God when it is pronounced by all those lips summons up the same image to each one of those minds? And yet for all of them the dogma of God subsists, and it is because it is still living that it lends itself to so many interpretations. But observe that it is living only because it serves as the expression of a piety felt by all these believers and common to them all.''¹

The notion that we can have a religion without a theology implies a false conception of spiritual activity. The inner life is

¹ *The Vitality of Christian Dogmas*, pp. 26 seq.

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a unity, and all its elements work together in action and reaction. Without some kind of idea, our practical religious life would soon cease to have any meaning. It is true that great ideas of religion are not clear-cut and sharply defined, but vague and symbolical. It is, however, these vague and symbolical ideas that are the most powerful levers of the human will and the greatest stimulus to human emotion.

Still further, as history shows, dogma has subserved a valuable purpose in protecting the essence of religion. R. H. Hutton, speaking of Newman's *Arians of the Fourth Century*, laments the fact that the great Cardinal "thought of dogma a little too much as the essence instead of as the mere protective covering of revelation. The substance of revelation is the character of God; and dogma is only necessary to those whose minds cannot enter into this marvellous revelation of the character of God and of his love for man, without asking a hundred

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questions to which in our present state only very imperfect and unsatisfactory answers can be given—answers that only show how much greater are the difficulties of the semi-sceptics than of the hearty believers and do not show that Christian faith is itself free from serious difficulty.”¹ Thus does it come about that while faith creates theology, theology, in turn, awakens and propagates faith. Moreover, with the exercise of reason in religion, there comes a certain largeness and balance of view that preserves the mind from the fanaticism that so greatly disfigures the popular faith, and from the shallowness which is the curse of so much modern philanthropy. Many of the quasi-philosophical and irrational cults and associations that are attracting adherents from the historical Christian Churches would never have gained a vogue had the Christian laity been encouraged to think freely and intelligently about the problems of faith. If this genera-

¹ *Cardinal Newman*, p. 30.

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tion is to be saved, on the one hand from impotence and despair in face of the great intellectual and social questions clamouring for an answer, and on the other hand from fanaticism and uncritical acceptance of doctrines created by an overheated and unregulated enthusiasm, it can only be by a theology large, rich, generously human, which, while not breaking violently with the past, will yet be loyal to the claims and needs of the present.

What, now, of the future of theology? For the traditionalist and the agnostic alike, there is none. To the mind of the former theology is a fixed quantity, eternally unchangeable, its existence is a death in life; in the view of the latter it is slowly but surely advancing to the grave dug to receive it. Neither position will stand the test of criticism. However Divine the content of theology may be, as a science it is earthly, and makes advances like all earthly forms of

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knowledge, from the less to the more adequate conceptions and principles. Ideas are like seeds: they germinate in the intellectual soil of an age; gather nutriment from all sides; grow, and in growing, are transformed. Religious persons are at present much exercised over what claims to be a new theology. The term, strictly taken, is inept and irrelevant. The best religious thinking of the past, as of any given period, is new, in the sense that a tree is new at any moment of its growth; it is old, in the sense that the tree preserves through all its changes a conformity to the type given in its earlier germ. Each age must have its own theology: that is, its reasoned system of beliefs expressed in terms of its own consciousness. It must win the truth for itself, and not receive it merely ready-made from the hands of past generations. The faculties by which religious doctrine is established grow in fineness, in intensity, and in power. With the growth of intellect, of holi-

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ness, of purity and clearness of vision, of an experience akin to that of Christ, there comes an ever-increasing insight into the meaning of Divine things, which in turn demands fresh doctrinal forms within which the spiritual life may feel itself at home. "A new experience," says Professor G. W. Knox, "may produce a new theology."¹ It has been so all through the Christian past. Theology has not, like the Bourbons, learned nothing and forgotten nothing: nay, it has been through forgetting that she has learned. Genesis has been taken from us as a scientific school-book, to be given back to us as a prophetic scroll exhibiting not the transitory face but the Divine meaning of nature. The dread phantoms that haunted the imagination of an Augustine or a Dante, as they speculated on the fate of unbaptised infants, have vanished before the more Christ-like thought of a later age. The strange fantastic fictions that theologians have woven

¹ *The Gospel of Jesus, the Son of God*, p. 23.

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around even the Cross of Calvary—such a notion, for example, as ruled the Church's thought for seven centuries, that, in dying, Christ was to play a trick upon the devil, baiting the hook of His Divine nature with His humanity, and thus subjugating him by a clever stratagem—excite a repulsion of mind that is a measure of the distance we have travelled in the things of religion. And to-day such doctrines as the inspiration and authority of the Bible, the Fall of Man, and Original Sin, are calling aloud for reconstruction in view of the assured results of historical criticism and the science of anthropology. The data with which theology is concerned are the facts of the spiritual life as they are disclosed in history and in the Christian consciousness of to-day. But, as our knowledge of history and of the spiritual life is continually growing, it follows that the rational interpretation of this knowledge must also grow. On the other hand, any attempt to break violently with

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the past and to overthrow the great central convictions which sustain Christian faith is doomed to failure. After all, there is, as Matthew Arnold used to say, a stream of right reason in the world, and only by keeping in this stream is a man likely to serve the cause of truth and the spiritual interests of his own generation. Not by creating new dogmas, then, but by reinterpreting old ones in the light of a fresher experience, will the religious thinker meet the demands of the modern situation. Christian men of all ages are thus bound together not in the bonds of a dead uniformity, but in the unity of a common life and a common inspiration.

But the agnostic, by a curious myope, sees in every advance of religious thought a sign of disintegration, decay, and speedy death. All that we know of what lies behind the inner and outer worlds of appearance is the Unknowable; and we are bidden to bow before this *caput mortuum*, this residuary

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phantom of a barren dialect, as though it were the supreme reality. Now that the metaphysician has shown that agnosticism cannot even be stated without involving a contradiction in thought, the way is open to the theologian to remove the mask that hides from us the face of the living God and reveal Him as the Father of spirits, the eternal Source of energy from Whom come and in Whom are those finite, energising centres which we call human souls. For one thing, even agnosticism no longer confounds mind with non-human nature and makes man like a plant or an animal, a product of what is called in the narrower sense the cosmic process. Man is no longer robbed of all ethical value and explained solely in terms of animalism. His moral nature is a possession which, we are beginning to realise, is of eternal worth in a universe otherwise transitory. Be the links that bind him to the lower creation however many and subtle, there is a growing consciousness that within

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him there is an element in nature that may well claim affinity with the Divine. As a sentient being he seems the sport and play of cosmic forces; but as a being who alone can hear the categorical imperative of conscience, can lend, as Goethe says, permanence to the moment, can hearken to the whisper of immortal hopes, he is where theology has always placed him—at the centre of the universe. Thus science leads us to the threshold of religion and leaves us there.

The second cheering consideration for the theologian is that materialism, which threatened to swamp the spiritual life of man a generation ago is now everywhere discredited. Whatever theory of things may be true, no educated man to-day can accept the materialistic doctrine. Even Professor Haeckel, who conceives of the world as a huge mechanism in which man is set as a kind of puppet moved by mechanical wires, at the end of his book on the World Riddles

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erects an altar to Truth, Goodness, and Beauty, which in unity will constitute the Deity of the future. Why, in a world where freedom is an illusion and all our spiritual activities are the functions of the central nervous system, Truth, Goodness, and Beauty must constitute the goal of all our efforts, Professor Haeckel does not explain. This writer is not, as he is careful to point out, a materialist, but a monist. Nevertheless, his monism is such as to leave matter and energy victorious.

Thirdly, the theory of evolution, which was at first considered both by agnostic and believer to be the foe of religion, has turned out to be its friend. For criticism has made it increasingly clear that, while all animals are modified descendants of a more simple type, and that probably every form of life originally sprang from some monad germ, it remains true that natural selection and the survival of the fittest cannot bear the strain put upon them and do not account for all

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that is implied in the evolutionary process. Nay, more, the application of the evolutionary principle in theology has been productive of the richest results. Modern divinity is not an analysis and co-ordination of texts merely. It is above all concerned with doctrines as vital growths originating in simple and informal thoughts of the early centuries, and, under the influence of the general intellectual life of the world, unfolding in ever-augmenting richness and complexity until their full fruit and flower are manifest in the higher religious conceptions of the modern Church.

Finally, historical criticism, which has done so much to purge theology of accidental accretions, has also contributed very materially to its substance and strength. It used to be said that our knowledge of Jesus of Nazareth was so dubious that it was impossible to discover what He really did say and do; how much that is attributed to Him really occurred, and how much is the fabrica-

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tion of the various parties which constituted the primitive communities. Whether He ever prayed the Lord's Prayer, or delivered the Sermon on the Mount, has been declared exceedingly doubtful. It is a reassuring reflection that now, after the long intellectual and spiritual travail of the past eighty years or so, this agnostic despair of history is no longer possible. The labours of such men as Schleiermacher, H. J. Holtzmann, Keim, Weizsäcker, Jülicher, Harnack, and Johannes Weiss—to name only a few among the Germans—and Westcott, Sanday, Stanton, Bruce, and Burkitt among British writers, have not been fruitless of their due. Nay, even by a curious historical irony, men like Strauss, whose aim was to destroy Christianity by resolving into myth its foundations, have only succeeded in clearing away the rubbish which had gathered around these foundations and in revealing the real strength of the Christian position. It may be taken as historically certain that the tra-

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ditions of Christ's life rest ultimately upon two documents—the Gospel of Mark substantially as we have it and the matter common to Matthew and Luke not found in Mark. On these two pillars the Gospel history rests. That their substance rests on the testimony of eye-witnesses of Christ's career may be accepted as one of the assured results of criticism. Even the most radical critics admit that in essence the teaching ascribed to Christ is really His. Still further, a new attitude has been taken up toward the miraculous element in evangelical tradition. It used to be thought that the presence of a miracle in a document was enough of itself to discredit the claim of the document to be historical. This critical rule rested on a notion which we now recognise to be fallacious,—that the early Christians took up our modern attitude toward miracle, whereas we now know that their standpoint was such that they might very well interpret as “miraculous” an event which we would

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describe as "extraordinary." It is now generally admitted that, whether we can accept a miracle in the sense of a violation of the law of cause and effect or no, we cannot eliminate the marvellous, the extraordinary, from the earliest sources of the Gospel tradition without at the same time destroying the historical worth of the documents as a whole. These positions established, consequences flow from them in the light of which we see theology to be, not, as some think, a more or less dextrous manipulation of abstract notions, but a sympathetic interpretation of the realities of the history. They give us a fulcrum in the real light of humanity for all our constructive endeavours. Christ is the inspiration of the Christian religion and, therefore, the main source of a Christian theology; and the criticism of the nineteenth century has made the character of Christ as an actual presence in history a permanent possession of our thought. Theology will become more and more humanised

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by the vision of God in the humanity of Christ. Men are asking to-day, not "Is there a God?" but, "What kind of a God is He who is involved in all thought and life? what is the character of the Will behind the universe?" As we look at Jesus as He lives and breathes in Gospel history, we find God. We cannot conceive a deity whose character would be grander or more worthy of our utmost homage. Accepting this revelation, we can face the tasks of the sceptical intellect. We can bear the mysteries in which our life is set. No doubt, we have here rather a faith and a conviction than a reasoned and demonstrated conclusion. But truth can afford to wait. We see a light shining in the darkness, and as we have been compelled to interpret nature in terms of man, so our thinking seems now forced to interpret man in terms of Christ. The noble and ennobling thought that humanity is organically related to Christ, that He is the Archetype to which in the creative purpose

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of God all men are called to be conformed, has sunk deep into the heart of our age and is already bearing fruit in the humaner spirit, the more gracious and generous service, and the wider social sympathies of all religious men. Hence the theology of the future will have a more and more social cast. It will bring to bear upon our social disputes and confusions the mighty solvent of great spiritual ideas. If Christian theology rests ultimately on Christ, it can no more ignore Him when He speaks of our duty to feed the hungry and clothe the naked and visit those in prison, than when He discourses on the Fatherhood of God and the advent of the Kingdom. Too often in the past theology has concerned itself almost wholly with events in the supernatural order. Henceforth, without neglecting these, it will seek to throw light upon the problems of this world, the bitter problems of poverty, sickness, crime, and social morality.

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Some of the questions which have been here lightly touched upon will receive fuller discussion and illustration in the chapters which follow.

CHAPTER II

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT JESUS CHRIST

THERE are some rarely gifted spirits, born mystics, who can dispense with dependence on the records of the past, so vivid is their present realisation of spiritual truths. Such persons feel hampered by minute inquiries into the genuineness of this or that element in the Gospels, and are inclined to concede everything the sceptic demands, and then gladly ask—"What of it? Have we not still God, the ideal life and immortality? No critical questioning can prove or disprove these supreme realities. They are grounded in the depths of the soul, not communicated through books and parchments, or implicated in the events of a distant century." But even the mystic owes something to history, for he himself has been nourished on the facts. He has so brooded upon the stories of the Gospels

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that their meaning has passed into his blood, has become so much a part of him that the facts themselves seem no longer to concern him; they are but the dry husks from which the living kernel has been extracted. But this is the achievement only of a peculiar type of temperament. Normal man feels his faith reinforced by the conviction that the spiritual realities in which he would believe are not air-spun dreams of enthusiasm, but the truths of history. Could it be shown that Jesus never lived, or that the tradition about Him which has come down to us gives a distorted view of His person and work, I do not say that faith in Divine things would perish from the earth; but I am sure it would be immeasurably poorer, and would find itself hard-driven to hold up against the forces that threaten it. Faith, indeed, goes beyond facts; sees them clothed with Divine meaning and radiant in the splendours of the eternal world. Nevertheless, faith finds in them its impulse, and, conscious of their existence, feels poised on

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steadier wing in its flight from earth and time. Were we disembodied spirits we might expect the objects of our faith to reveal themselves in a purely ideal way; but we are creatures of space and time, and if the invisible, eternal order is so to manifest itself as to take hold of us, it can do this only through the facts of the visible, temporal order in which our lives are set. Nor must we forget that Nemesis has more than once overtaken a purely mystical religion, with its contempt for the critical faculties, in the form of a flippant scepticism for which all religion has been an outgrown superstition. The importance of the question, "What do we know about Jesus?" is thus obvious. He differs from all other historical persons in that He is at once the object of impersonal historical knowledge, and of the most personal reverence and faith. As the object of our knowledge, he appears at a certain spot on this earth, and at a given moment, lives our life, speaks words and per-

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forms deeds that affect those about Him, inaugurates a great spiritual movement, and finally dies our death. As the object of our faith, He reveals God and makes us sure of eternal life. However much the processes of knowing and believing intermingle in experience, they are to be distinguished in the interests alike of science and religion. Nevertheless, man is a spiritual unity. His knowledge influences his belief, and his belief in turn urges him to know. Our faith in Christ will grow stronger, more sure of itself, the nearer we get to Him as He actually lived on earth. My present purpose, therefore, is not to offer an interpretation of the life and work of Jesus Christ, but to make clear what history has to tell us about them.

On the threshold of our discussion we are met with a serious objection. It is said that however desirable it may be to become acquainted with Jesus Christ as a historical person, the sources of information at our disposal are so scanty, so uncertain, so contam-

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inated with doubtful elements, that we are driven to doubt whether He ever really lived, or, if He lived, whether we ever can know Him. A recent writer who undertakes to tell us what we know about Jesus, comes to the conclusion that we know very little. "It is evident by this time," he said, "that no one can make anything but a vague and purely conjectural narrative of the life of Jesus. . . . How many clearly authentic utterances have we from Jesus? What can we rest upon? What, exactly, did He say? What did He say of Himself and His mission? What commandments did He lay down, or what ordinances did He establish? What new ideas, if any, did He contribute? The study of all these questions must be found, if at all, in a few pages of the synoptic Gospels. No one is sure or can possibly be sure of these answers."¹ I offer two remarks on this view of the life of Jesus. In the first place, it is impossible to believe that the long travail

¹Dole: *What We Know about Jesus*, pp. 29, 9.

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of highly equipped intellects which have been at work for over a century on the New Testament records, ends in this lame and impotent conclusion. Were this true, the science of history would indeed be in a bad way. In the second place, to speak of Jesus Christ and His teaching as if these were so vague and uncertain that we can never know anything definite about them is, I venture to think, to ignore the most solid results of modern scholarship. Before indicating in rough outline what scholarship has to say about our question, it may be well to state that the layman in theology does not need to undertake a course in Biblical criticism and theological apologetics before he can assure himself of the historical reality and spiritual features of the Lord Jesus. As Dr. H. Weinell writes, "It is precisely the greatness of Jesus and the peculiarity of the tradition concerning Him, that every one of His brief sayings and every one of His parables, and all the stories concerning Him, display His inner character entire and

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display it so clearly that even the unlearned man may receive from it the deepest impression. . . . Let a man have heard but once the Parable of the Good Samaritan or of the Prodigal Son or of the Wicked Servant, and may we not believe that by means of one such passage he may become well acquainted with Jesus and entirely captivated by Him? Is any further experience necessary, beyond that of the goodness and purity, the sincerity and earnestness which shine forth from these stories? ”¹

We have but to place ourselves face to face with the picture of Jesus as it has been handed down to us in the Gospels, and put aside for the moment whatever elements in the story we are unable to assimilate, in order to feel that we are in touch not with fancy, but with fact; and learned investigations confirm the intuition of the average mind.

The earliest source of our knowledge about

¹ *Jesus or Christ?* (Hibbert Journal Supplement, 1909, p. 43).

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Jesus is the unquestioned letters of St. Paul; and their significance lies not so much in what they say as in what they imply. These documents, penned within twenty-five years or so of the Crucifixion, but enshrining experiences of the writer which go back to within five years of that event and bring him into contact with Peter and James, the Lord's brother, assume that the details of our Lord's earthly life were well known to the readers, and draw from this knowledge motives to self-sacrifice, gentleness, and Christian living. If by some unhappy chance the Gospels had been irrecoverably lost, and Paul's four great letters, Galatians, 1st and 2d Corinthians, and Romans, survived, we could reconstruct, not, indeed, the details of His career, but a general picture of His historical reality, of the moral and spiritual features of His character, some of His fundamental ideas, the fact of His death, and the significance attached to it by Himself and His disciples, and the profound impression which His personality made

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on the men of His time. Turn from Paul to the Gospels, and you pass into a different world, a new psychological climate. But the person who lives and acts there is in all essential characteristics He in whom Paul had found the strength of his strength and the life of his life.

Our next and main source of information is the four Gospels. Critical scholarship has spent infinite labour in scrutinising and analysing every word of these documents. The fourth Gospel stands by itself, and is still a problem far from solution. The general opinion is that it contains sound historical traditions, and even corrects the other three Gospels. Nevertheless, as a whole, it is to be viewed not as history, but as an interpretation of history. Its concern is not so much with the facts as with the spiritual meaning of the facts. We must, therefore, turn to the first three Gospels; and, while it is truth to say that "the most conservative student cannot throw one of them, in its present

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shape, back to within a generation of the time of Jesus,"¹ it is not the whole truth. It may be taken as a certain historical fact that our first three Gospels go back to two main sources—the Gospel of Mark and a Collection of our Lord's Sayings,² the latter a lost document capable of reconstruction in part from the material which Matthew and Luke have in common without any parallels in Mark. That Matthew and Luke used other sources may be taken as certain; but we do not know what they were. Nevertheless, we are in a position to construct from the Gospel of Mark and the "Collection of Sayings" an intelligible and rational outline of the public career of Jesus; and we are able to learn the great organising ideas and principles of Christ's thought. The "Collection of Sayings," originally in Aramaic, goes back to the Apostolic age, and possibly may have had an

¹ Dole: *What We Know about Jesus*, p. 5.

² This is usually designated as "Q" (from the German "*Quelle*"—Source).

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Apostolic compiler. The Gospel of Mark cannot be much later, it is generally agreed, than the year 70 A.D., and rests for much of its material on Peter's reminiscences of his Master. As Dr. Harnack writes, "As to our knowledge of the teaching and the history of our Lord, in their main features, at least, this depends upon two authorities, independent of one another, yet composed at nearly the same time: Where they agree their testimony is strong, and they agree often and on important points. On the rock of their united testimony the assault of destructive critical views, however necessary these are to easily self-satisfied research, will ever be shattered to pieces."¹

Another veteran German critic has summed up in a few brief sentences almost the entire result of a century of critical inquiry into the structure of the Gospels: "Mark is no excerpt from but an ingredient of the other two Gospels. Almost the whole of his material is

¹ *Sayings of Jesus*, p. 249.

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found in them. They follow his outline and return to it after certain interpolations. When they desert his order they differ as a rule from one another.”¹ “In Mark and Q,” says an English scholar, “we have two independent accounts which are alike traceable to a comparatively early period. Alike they point to Palestinian circles, to a tradition which, originating on Aramaic soil, is still, on the whole, free from foreign influences.”² We have thus two sound sources on which to depend. But this is not all. We can use these sources as a test by which to sift the other materials in the canonical Gospels. Whatever is in harmony with the substance of Mark and the “Collection of Sayings” may be judged to be historical. When this test is applied we find, in the words of a recent thorough-going critic, that “science rescues the chief

¹ Wellhausen: *Einleitung in die drei ersten Evangelien*, p. 43.

² *Cambridge Biblical Essays*, p. 457.

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contents of the synoptic Gospels for the life of Jesus.”¹

It is true that these sources are very fragmentary and leave many hard problems to be solved. But the question is not—Have we the materials for a scientific biography of Jesus, in the modern sense? but, Have we information about Him sufficient to make intelligible His character, His career, and His ideas? To this latter question my answer is an unhesitating affirmative.

We do well to remember that we can never hope fully to understand Jesus or His religion, not merely because the sources of information are so incomplete, but also because He is greater than the tradition of His life and stands on a spiritual plane far above those who saw and heard Him. The remark of Goethe has its application here: “The eye sees what it brings with it the power of seeing.”

We have probably seen the last of the great

¹ Arno Neumann: *Jesus*, p. 12.

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scientific biographies of Jesus, though the significance of His character and work for humanity will be interpreted anew to each fresh generation. Theodor Keim's famous work, *Jesus of Nazara*, closes the series of classic efforts to reproduce in detail and in strict chronological order the life and ministry of the Son of Man. And the reason is that we must acquiesce in the uncertainty about many of the externals of Christ's career—the year and day of His birth, the exact year and day of His death, the forces that shaped His early development, the thoughts that occupied Him as a youth, the precise length of His public activity, and the precise order of its events, the motives of the various actors in the final tragedy; on these and other matters of detail we may form more or less probable theories, but we cannot speak with certainty concerning them. We must not, however, let our losses, which are, after all, far from vital, shut our eyes to the priceless value of what we possess. A careful

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study of the earliest sources of the life of Jesus can give us certainty of the essential matters. We know, for example, partly from non-Christian authorities, that Jesus of Nazareth was a genuinely historical person, and lived a genuinely human life; that He was born in the reign of Augustus, and was crucified in the reign of Tiberius. Of this to-day any man who will take the trouble can assure himself. We know the critical moments in His career, and to some extent see how the drama develops to its terrible *dénouement*. We know His moral, social, and political environment, the stage on which the scenes are set; Pharisee, Sadducee, Herodian, Roman, the respectable and degraded classes, the men of wealth and standing, and the outcasts of the proletariat stand before us, not the stuffed figures of artifice, but creatures of flesh and blood, photographed from life. We know the great organising ideas of His teaching, the forms in which they were expressed, and many of the very words He used. We know

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what He thought of human life; what was His attitude toward it, what it meant for Him; and in knowing this we go to the very heart of His message. We know in what His practical work consisted; what He meant when He said, "The Son of Man is come not to be ministered unto, but to minister." We know how it was that He came into conflict with the Jewish authorities, and we can trace the gradual darkening of the conflict to its inevitable end in His judicial murder. We know that Peter and Paul and James, the Lord's brother, and many others, believed they saw Him risen from the dead; and we know that on this belief the Church was founded and started on its world-conquering mission. Let us now examine our sources for a more explicit account of what has been thus summarily stated.

Jesus appears first in connection with the work of John the Baptist. He is drawn from His home in Nazareth to be baptised of John in the Jordan. The Baptist was not a kind

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of Jewish Socrates, as Josephus represents him, but a figure cast in the grand style of the Old Testament Prophets. We cannot get close to him, owing to the fragmentary character of our information about him, but we can see what a gigantic shadow he flings upon the stage of the Gospel history. His message is a sharp summons to repentance and reformation of life, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand, and this means judgment, immediate, overwhelming, irremediable. He likens the Kingdom to an axe driven into the root of a barren tree and bringing it down to earth; or to a fan with which the husbandman separates the chaff from the wheat, and the wheat is safely garnered in the barns, while the chaff is burned up. The Messiah who is about to appear will judge not only the heathen, but all the hypocrites and sinners of Israel. Upon Jesus the appearance of John makes a profound impression. For Him he is a prophet and more than a prophet, marking the end of the old order of law and proph-

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ecy, and heralding a new order, the Kingdom of the Messiah. Jesus accepts baptism at his hands as an example of dedication to the coming Kingdom. It is at this consecrated hour that a great revelation is vouchsafed Him. He hears God's voice within His soul calling Him to the work of the Messiah, the actual founding of the Kingdom which John announces. "Thou art my beloved Son. In Thee I am well pleased." Within Him is born a consciousness of power, the fruit of the Spirit of God, who now interprets to Him the hopes and aspirations of His past. This revelation marks a crisis which He must face alone. He feels Himself irresistibly compelled—"driven," as Mark realistically says, to bury Himself in the solitude of the desert, that He may come to terms with this new experience and decide His future course. Here it was that He passed through a bitter struggle, in which His new-found Messianic consciousness was tested to the uttermost. The drama of the Temptation, related in the

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“Collection of Sayings” in allegorical form,¹ is so psychologically probable in itself that, as has been observed, even had we no record of it we should be compelled to assume some such experience. His temptations sprang out of the conviction that He was the Messiah. Hence they are on a great spiritual scale and such as could visit only a great soul. He was tempted to grasp at world-wide sovereignty by means of brute force and political expedient. He was tempted to transgress the bounds of the natural, and reveal Himself as the Messiah, because One guarded by special supernatural means. He was tempted to use His Messianic powers for personal ends, and at the same time prove to Himself the reality of the Messianic call. Out of the threefold trial He emerges victorious. He appears first in Galilee after the Baptist’s arrest by Antipas, as a prophetic Reformer reaffirming the Baptist’s message; only now it thrills the hearer with a new note—the note of joy.²

¹ Matthew iv, 1-11; Luke iv, 1-12. ² Mark i, 14.

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His message is a Gospel that is a word of good from God to men. It speaks not of judgment only, but of salvation. Jesus knows that in His own person the Kingdom has become a fact, and in its blessedness He would have all men share. Thus it was He became a Teacher and Healer, laying down the nature and principles of the Kingdom and showing it actually at work in the lives of men, banishing disease and pain and misery.

How can we be sure that the substance of the teaching ascribed in the Gospels to Jesus really came from Him? First of all, its inherent spiritual greatness, its profound insight into God and the human soul; its ethical sweep and range, unifying the religious and moral consciousness; its comprehensive yet intensely personal quality, its inner unity, based on a definite and clearly conceived view of the world—all these characteristics stamp it as the product of one original, creative Mind. And then the form in which for the most part the thought is cast, though familiar

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to the teachers of His time, is here used with unexampled ease and mastery, freshness and pliability. Paradox, similitude, hyperbole, sententious saying, and parable are the vehicles of His message, and they have become the familiar language of religion in every Christian land. The inner harmony of His thought is strongly attested by the fact that its main elements can be reduced to one or other of a few formative ideas—the idea of God as Father or of man as God's son, or of love as the true bond of man to God and man to his brother, or of sin as a breach of this bond, or of the Kingdom of God as a society of souls ruled by love and enjoying perfect peace and blessedness.

The name of God which Jesus loved best and which was ever on His lips, was "Father." The word itself may mean much or little. It all depends on our experience of the relation it symbolises. There are earthly fathers, and were they to interpret God to us we should fall into

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despair and close with pessimism as our final creed. Greek poets and philosophers, Old Testament prophets and Psalmists, some of the later rabbis had learned to name God "Father," but it was the simple human thought of Jesus that fills the name with all that makes God dear to the heart, that transforms the Divine Fatherhood into a living reality, a glad possession of the soul. He sees the reflection of God's tender-hearted Fatherly goodness everywhere in nature and humanity—in the clothing of the lilies, in the rain that falls upon the just and upon the unjust, in the beneficence that notes even the death of a sparrow, in the instincts of men, who know how to give good things to their children. When He calls God "Father" He says something that appeals not to the intellect merely, but to the whole man, and something that all men and not philosophers only can understand. He assumes as an acknowledged truth the Divine existence, and proceeds to disclose, in terms of the highest

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spiritual aptitudes of man's own life, the character of the existence thus assumed.

Man is God's child. This is, of course, the correlate of Divine paternity. And as Milton says, "the relation stands," even though sin robs it of its glory and its joy. Here the best illustration of Christ's thought is the Parable of the Prodigal Son. The son may waste his substance in a far country, but the father has not forgotten him, still loves him with a love that has now become a pain; and when the wanderer returns the father's pent-up emotion gives way, and he takes him to his arms again and overwhelms him with the tokens of his gladness. "Such," said Jesus, "is a picture of how God feels to the sinner and the outcast."

If was because men were God's children, ignorant, misled, mistaking the shadow for the substance, that Christ's view of sin, unlike that of His contemporaries, did not make forgiveness impossible. Nowhere do the sanity, moderation, and closeness to reality of

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Christ's teaching, when compared with that of other religious leaders, appear more conspicuously than in His view of moral evil. He recognises the horror and shame of guilt, and yet he finds publicans and sinners more accessible than the respectable classes. The Pharisee is conscious of no lack; but Christ has only to say the fitting word and the publican melts in tears and becomes the most charitable of men. Everywhere Jesus moves about with the eye of an optimist. His belief in the native goodness of the soul creates the very goodness in which He believed. To His eye men and women were not hopeless criminals. They were only sheep, lost upon the mountains, and to be gathered into the Father's fold. And yet there is no trace of sentimentalism, of confusion of moral issues, in His treatment of sinners. He knows that sins of the flesh are murderous, cruel, and, if persisted in, spell ruin to body and soul. But He also recognises that as long as love is not wholly killed in man or woman, they

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are not beyond the possibility of redemption. With profound insight, He selects three sins for special condemnation, because they are the sins that kill love. The first is that of the typical Pharisee. It is the sin of self-satisfaction, of profound self-deception, of believing one's self to be possessed of a character to which he can lay no real claim. It is this lie in the soul which Jesus blasts with His scorn. The second sin is that of worldliness. He pictures the God of the worldling, whose name is Mammon; and this god blinds the eyes of His worshippers so that they have a false view of the values of life. A mammon-worshipper cannot enter the Kingdom of God, into which the poor and the despised pass readily. The cares and riches and pleasures of this life so entangle the soul in their soft meshes that when God summons it to sacrifice or service, it cannot obey. The third sin is callousness of heart. We see this portrayed in the picture of the elder brother in the Parable, who will not forgive the

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Prodigal, and in the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant, who, having been forgiven an immense debt, treats harshly a poor fellow-servant who owes him a few paltry dollars. Jesus has thus reversed the usual judgment of men who hold up to special reprobation anti-social sins. Jesus pierces to the depths of the heart, and reveals the worldly-minded, the hypocritical, and the hard-hearted, as the worst of sinners. There is one saying, mysterious and terrible, yet an indubitable utterance of Christ, a saying which has plunged many a poor distracted spirit into fear and foreboding. "There is," says Jesus, "an unpardonable sin: it is speaking against the Holy Spirit."¹ The saying must be viewed in the light of Christ's teaching as a whole. The unpardonableness of the sin will then be seen to spring not from God's or Christ's unwillingness to forgive, but from the fact that the sinner refuses to let the offered forgiveness enter. It is a state of wilful and per-

¹ Matthew xii, 32; Luke xii, 10.

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sistent trampling under foot of the love of God revealed in the gracious activities of His spirit.

“ The Kingdom of God ” is a phrase which Jesus found in popular use as a semi-religious, semi-political catch-word. He takes it up, fills it with new meaning, and makes it the central theme of His Gospel. The Kingdom of God is the gradual organisation of society in accordance with the supreme principle of love, in which every man will receive according to his need and will serve according to his capacity, and in which the great truths of God’s Fatherhood and man’s brotherhood will be actually realised. This is the spiritual essence of Christ’s idea. It was indeed set forth in the imagery of prophet and apocalyptist. How else could it have been made intelligible? To the prophetic eye the perspective of history seems foreshortened; and so it need not surprise us to find Jesus believing with the pious kernel of His people that the Kingdom

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was "at the doors," was about to break forth, though the exact moment was known only to God. He expresses His thought in paradoxical terms. The Kingdom is present, yet future; external, yet spiritual; a task to be achieved, yet also a free gift of God; catastrophic and spectacular, yet one with a germinating seed, with the permeating leaven. "Was Jesus Christ a Socialist?" modern men ask. Yes, and more than a Socialist. It is because of this *more* that modern socialism has never come to terms with Him. Was he, as some critics would have us believe, an apocalyptic seer, for whom all history was condensed into a few brief moments to be followed by cataclysm, judgment, and the Kingdom of Heaven opened to all believers? Yes; He was a seer and more than a seer; and hence the hopes and dreams, the visions and views of His contemporaries, can help us to understand His speech, but do not exhaust the significance of His thought. He is so simple in His greatness, so great in His

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simplicity, that He escapes the categories of the modern as He did those of the ancient world.

Let us now turn to the other side of His activity—His work as a physician. His earliest biographer would have us note how, at the beginning of His ministry, He strikes the keynote that is to dominate it throughout. In Capernaum we hear His twofold message, or, rather, His one message with a double aspect. He speaks to normal and ordered humanity, and He at the same time relieves the abnormal and disordered. He enters the synagogue and utters the compelling, inspiring word which holds the hearer spellbound by its mingled grace and authority,¹ and then He exercises the health-creating energies of His own lofty will and consecrated personality upon a sick man, and restores him to self-possession and peace. His works of healing are as much a genuinely historical element in the Gospels as is His model prayer

¹Mark i, 21 *seq.*

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or the Sermon on the Mount. On this point all Biblical scholars are agreed. Celsus, the great critic of Christianity in the second century, was satisfied that the healing wonders recorded in the Gospels were facts; but he explained them by saying that Jesus had lived for a time as a labourer in Egypt, and had there learned the arts of magic. The explanation we may pass by, but the admission is significant. It will perhaps bring home to us the historical reality of these stories if we select one of them and examine it in the light of what modern psychological medicine has to say. We will choose one which is generally regarded as very difficult, and which, indeed, led Huxley into a protracted polemic against orthodox Christianity. It is the story of the demoniac of Gerasa reported by Mark, and taken over from him, with some small changes, by Matthew and Luke.¹ The story is told somewhat awkwardly, but with a little reflection it can be

¹Mark v, 1-17; Matthew viii, 28-34; Luke viii, 26-39.

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made clear. Jesus has landed with some disciples on the southeastern shore of the Lake, at a spot near a town identified by modern travellers with the ruins which now go by the name of Gersa or Khersa. At this point in the coast there is a sharp declivity leading down to the water.¹ There meets Him a man “with an unclean spirit.” He comes from the tombs or burial vaults in the hillside, where he has taken up his abode. His friends have tried to tame him by binding him with fetters and manacles of iron, just as in the eighteenth century, in Europe, insane people were kept in filthy cages, their food flung to them through the bars, and their lives made horrible by every device of ignorance and superstition. The sufferer in our story breaks his chains and prowls about the tombs and the hillsides, a terror to the passers-by. Jesus at once addresses the unclean spirit or demon: “What is thy name?” The spirit

¹ See *Encyclopædia Biblica*, Art. *Gerasa* and *Gerasenes*.

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replies, using the man's organs of speech, "My name is Legion, for we are many." It is possible that the man may have seen the serried ranks of a Roman legion, thousands strong, with the officer at its head. The demon possessing him is like that officer surrounded by thousands of attendant spirits, and in his abnormal state he conceives of the demons in terms of this experience. Jesus at once commands the demons to depart, and is answered by the cry, "What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, thou Son of the Most High God? I adjure Thee, by God, torment me not!" But already the demon knows that he is worsted. Probably it is the steady gaze of Jesus, to which there is more than one allusion in the Gospels, straight into the eyes of the demoniac, as well as the sharp, authoritative word, carrying in them the force of Christ's unique personality, that work the man's deliverance. Speaking for the spirits, he entreats Jesus not to send them out of the country—a reflection, of course, of pop-

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ular beliefs about the habits of demons. Catching sight of a herd of swine feeding on the hillside, the man's disordered fancy suggests that the demons might go into them. Our Lord gives the necessary permission. Then the swine rush down into the sea and perish. By the exercise of a little imagination we can picture the scene. The poor sufferer, convinced that the evil powers which have so long ruled him are about to depart and seek a fresh home in the swine, is caught in a final paroxysm. He utters loud and piercing cries. His gestures are wild and terrifying. Some of the animals, catching sight of him, stampede, communicate their panic to the rest, and they all blindly rush to their death. The people of the town who own the swine hurry out and behold the strange spectacle of the demoniac, now clothed and in his proper senses, sitting at the feet of Jesus. Christ's power strikes them with fear. He seems to hold sway over those occult forces that haunt the dim recesses of the world;

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they beseech Him to depart out of their neighbourhood. But the poor demoniac, who for the first time has been treated with love and power, begs Jesus that he may speak with Him. The Master, however, has other views about him. "No," He says; "go home to your own people and tell them all that God has done for you."

Such is the story. Is it historical?¹ Let me first offer two or three general considerations. In the first place, the belief in demons

¹The story is a sad crux for the commentators. B. W. Bacon (*The Beginnings of Gospel Story*, pp. 57-59) follows Strauss (*New Life of Jesus*, Vol. II, p. 184) in rejecting it as a piece of pure fiction or legend. E. P. Gould (*International Critical Commentary*, Mark) accepts it as in the main historical, but deals only with its literary aspects. J. Wellhausen (*Das Evangelium Marci*, p. 42) thinks it strange that the incident of commanding the demons to enter the swine should have been attributed to Jesus. The Jewish scholar, C. G. Montefiore (*Synoptic Gospels*, Vol. I, *in loco*), follows Wellhausen, and believes that this element belonged to a Jewish folk-tale originally unconnected with Jesus. A. Menzies (*The Earliest Gospel*, pp. 68-70; 121, 122), accepting the story as it stands, explains it by a general reference to modern mental and nervous disorders. Johannes Weiss (*Das älteste Evangelium*, pp. 185-190) defends the historical character of the narra-

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and in their power to enter the bodies of men and of animals cannot be cited to the prejudice of the narrative, because this was a universal belief in the first century. In the second place, we know from the synoptic Gospels that conflict with demons entered very considerably into the experience of Jesus. As Strauss says, if He healed sick people at all He must have cured demoniacs. In the third place, the interest of the Evangelist is not, as one may suppose at first sight, in the power of Jesus over demons, but in the

tive, and refutes the mythical theory. The weakness of the writers with whom I am acquainted is that they have not carefully compared the symptoms of the man's disorder with modern analogies. Those who accept the story as fundamentally historical, content themselves with a general reference to maniacal insanity. Experts in psychiatry, however, tell us that mania is never characterised by a systematised delusion such as this sufferer exhibits.

Dr. Morton Prince has kindly allowed me to quote his judgment—"There are only two views possible—either mania or hysteria. No fact stated is incompatible with hysteria, while some of the facts point directly to it; on the other hand, while some of the facts are compatible with mania, other facts are incompatible with it. On the whole, the probability is that it was a case of hysteria."

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outcome of the incident, namely, the fear of the town's people, their refusal of Christ's ministry, His quick departure, leaving behind Him as a preacher the man who has been cured. The aim of the narrator is to explain why Jesus was compelled to return so quickly from the pagan neighbourhood on the eastern shore. Were it otherwise, and had the narrator's purpose been to glorify the demon-conquering power of the Master, he would have stopped abruptly with the disappearance of the swine in the Lake. Finally, the cured man's request that he might attach himself to the company of Jesus is a touch too psychologically probable to be invented.

The conclusive argument, however, which should dispose, once for all, of any scepticism as to the essential historical character of the incident, is that the man's disorder and cure have analogies in modern medical practice. The distinguished neurologist, Professor Pierre Janet, of Paris, records a case of demon possession which he personally treated,

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containing many features analogous to those in our story.¹ Like the demoniac of Gerasa, Professor Janet's patient uttered words which seemed to him not his own but those of the spirit possessing him, suffered from loss of sensibility so that he was unconscious of pain, even when sharply pricked, and flung about his limbs in obedience to the commands of the demon. The case was one of pure hysteria, characterised by a profound disturbance of the subconscious element in mind. In the technical speech of the schools, the man was suffering from a "dissociation of personality"; and this was precisely, as the symptoms narrated show, the trouble with the demoniac in our story. We have seen that our Lord addressed the demon; and the modern scientific physician was unable to cure his patient until he, too, entered into conversation with the demon, and, after a long argument succeeded in compelling him to obey his

¹*Nevroses et Idées Fixes*, 1898, chap. x, *Un Cas de Possession et L'Exorcisme Moderne*.

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orders. If we set aside, as all modern scholars do, the interpretation which the Evangelist, in common with the eye-witnesses of the scene, and with the whole world of their day, placed upon the incident, neither historical science nor medical knowledge has anything to say against the credibility of this story.

Let us now notice the method of treatment, which, it must be observed, was very different from the methods then in vogue. Here again we have strong indirect proof that we are on the field of genuine history. Jesus stands apart from the exorcists of His time in His procedure. He uses no magical formulas or incantations, such as were common in Jewish and in pagan circles. With the power of His bare personality He confronts the kingdom of mental and moral evil. All here is simple and sublime. "His action," as Matthew Arnold says, "is like the grace of Raphael, or the grand style of Phidias, eminently natural; but it is above common low-pitched nature;

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it is a line of nature not yet mastered or followed out.”¹ Further, it is to be noted, He does not blame the demoniac, as though his miserable state was the penalty of sin. In some instances of sickness, as, for example, in the case of the man with a palsy, He does, indeed, appear to regard the illness as the consequence of some moral fault; but not so here. He views the demoniac as a victim, as enslaved to forces over which he has no control. Hence it will be observed that Christ does not ask for faith, as in the cases of ordinary sickness, simply because the psychical energy requisite or implied in faith is not possible. The man has lost self-control. He believes himself to be the slave of a demon, and the belief deepens his wretched state. Our Lord addresses the demon because (apart from His own belief in demoniacal activities) only by doing so could He carry conviction of cure to a mind full of belief in the reality of demon

¹ *Literature and Dogma*, chap. v.

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possession. Finally, the restored demoniac is not permitted to accompany the Master, but is sent to proclaim what God has done for him, among his own people. Here, again, modern science vindicates the wisdom of Christ, for a great, if not, indeed, the greatest therapeutic agency in mental troubles is the power of unselfish work, which acts at once as suggestion and re-education. Only through filling the mind with sound, inspiring, constructive ideas, can insane, morbid, and destructive ideas be cast out and kept out. It is another indirect proof of the genuineness of the healing stories that nowhere does Jesus call attention to anything wonderful about His work. Always does He emphasise its character as revealing the love and pity of God.

To aid Him in His work as Teacher and Healer Jesus gathers about Him a little band of twelve disciples, a nucleus of simple, susceptible spirits within a larger mass of more or less convinced adherents. Of the Twelve,

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three were especially devoted to Him—John, James, and Peter; and at critical moments we find them by His side. Two of these men, John and Peter, were destined to play a great part in the founding of the infant church, after the Master's death. Of the rest we know but little. We do know, however, that they were all Galileans except Judas of Keri-oth, whose memory has been loaded with scorn and infamy throughout the Christian centuries. He was a Judean, and doubtless a political enthusiast who had never felt himself quite at home with the Master. To these men Jesus particularly devotes Himself, initiating them into the deeper meaning of His parables, the secrets of the Kingdom, which could not be profitably unfolded to the larger circle of His hearers. Of these secrets the most momentous is that of His person. It breaks upon them gradually, through daily companionship with Him. They walked and talked and ate with Him. They saw Him in public and in private, and were thus prepared

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for the revelation when it dawned upon them. After a period of instruction, He sends them out on a missionary journey, two by two, to proclaim the nearness of the Kingdom, and to heal the sick. On their return, with glowing reports of success, He gives them a hint of the real greatness of the work they are engaged in. They are actually fulfilling ancient prophecy and bringing in the Kingdom.¹ But now His work and theirs receives a check. He had, at an earlier time, broken with the Jewish leaders at Capernaum, over the question of the lawfulness of healing on the Sabbath Day. His opponents, Pharisees and Herodians, entered into a conspiracy to get rid of Him.² But now not the Pharisees of Galilee only, but emissaries from the religious headquarters at Jerusalem, openly charged Him with sedition against the law of Moses, especially on questions of ceremonial purity. Levitical regulations, which they regarded as eternally binding, He sets

¹ Matthew xiii, 16, 17; Luke v, 23, 24. ² Mark iii, 6.

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aside brusquely as irrelevancies. The real question, according to Him, is: What is the condition of the heart? This, of course, was a revolutionary word, and marked a crisis in His relations with the Jewish leaders. Hence we find Jesus withdrawing from Jewish territory, wandering with His company of followers in the neighbourhood of Tyre and Sidon, and in the pagan parts of Decapolis, and then northward again in the villages of Cesarea Philippi. It is while in this last district that another critical incident takes place. He brings the views of His disciples about Himself to clear consciousness by asking them what the people generally thought about the Son of Man. Receiving the reply that He is taken by some for one of the older Prophets, by others for John the Baptist, risen from the dead, by others again, for Elijah, forerunner of the Messiah, He puts the testing question, "But who say ye that I am?"¹ His bosom friend Peter replies, "Thou art

¹ Mark viii, 29.

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the Messiah.” He accepts the title, but enjoins silence. The time is not ripe for its disclosure to the world. Were it generally known it might lead to grave danger for all concerned, for His Messianic ideal is not that of His countrymen. From this point onward we hear a new note not unheralded in His utterances. He speaks of judgment at the hands of “ elders, chief priests, and scribes,” of suffering and of death; not glory, but shame and humiliation are to be the Messiah’s portion. His hour of exaltation will come, but it is not yet.¹ To Jerusalem, then, Jesus will go, to force the hand of His enemies. He will there present Himself as the Son of the Lord of the Vineyard, and call upon the leaders of the nation to acknowledge Him for what He really is. Accompanied by His disciples He returns through Galilee to Capernaum, where He once again speaks about the conditions of entrance into the now imminent Kingdom. Leaving Capernaum,

¹ Mark viii, 38.

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He passes through the country east of the Jordan. Here we learn from Luke that He receives a warning of Herod's hostility, and sends back a reply which bears its authenticity on its face. "Go and say to that fox, Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I am perfected."¹ We do not know how long the journey through Peræa lasted (it must have occupied a few weeks), but we do know that on the Monday preceding the Passover of that year He entered Jerusalem riding on an ass, in accordance with ancient prophecy, and was acclaimed by the multitude as the Messiah. From Monday to Easter morning we have a clear and convincing record of events. On Monday night He stays at Bethany, a village a few miles from Jerusalem. On Tuesday a dramatic scene takes place which hastens the impending tragedy. Jesus enters the Temple precincts and sees the forecourt full of huckstering, trafficking traders

¹ Luke xiii, 32.

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buying and selling animals for the sacrifices and exchanging the foreign money for the sacred coinage of the priesthood. He watches piety making money under the cloak of serving God, and as He watches He is filled with prophetic indignation. As the Messiah, God's Son, He feels Himself armed with full authority to achieve a great deed of reformation. He turns out the rabble by force of arms and proclaims the Temple no longer a den of robbers, but a house of prayer for all nations. From this forward it is a battle to the death between Jesus and His enemies. Yet He will not deliberately court assassination, and so He prudently retires for the evening outside the city walls.¹ By day He continues to teach in the Temple porticos, and His words make a profound impression on all who hear them. Meantime, His opponents are watching for an opportunity to destroy Him. They try to trip Him up in argument, and so discredit Him with the peo-

¹ Mark xi, 19.

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ple, but are foiled by His Divine simplicity and wisdom. They cannot touch Him so long as He is surrounded by admiring friends. At last they resolve to take Him by stratagem, under cover of night, when the crowd is no longer about Him. An instrument to achieve their fell purpose is at hand. It is one of the most certain facts of history that the private retreat of Jesus outside the walls of Jerusalem was deliberately betrayed to the priestly party by one of His disciples, Judas of Kerioth. Our two earliest authorities, Mark and Paul, are unequivocal on this point.¹ On Thursday evening, in an upper room in the Holy City, Jesus institutes the Last Supper, in which, by means of broken bread and poured-out wine, He symbolises His death, as the consecration and pledge of a new covenant for the forgiveness of sin.² Supper ended, Jesus and His disciples issue forth to the Mount of Olives to

¹ Mark xiv, 10, 11; I. Cor. xi, 23.

² I. Cor. xi, 23, 25.

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spend the night there. Coming to a place called Gethsemane (the "oil press") He falls into profound anguish of soul, "with strong crying and tears," as a later writer touchingly notes, and the disciples catch a broken but precious fragment of His prayer: "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee; remove this cup from me; howbeit, not what I will, but what Thou wilt."¹ Overcome by the excitement and mental tension of the past few days, the disciples fall asleep while Jesus keeps His vigil with God. Suddenly the silence is broken by the sound of approaching footsteps. The disciples awake to find their Master in the hands of a band of Temple police headed by Judas. They offer little or no resistance. Jesus is arrested and hurried before the Sanhedrin, of which Caiaphas is president. We know the charge brought against Him. It was that of threatening to destroy the Temple and erecting another in its place, "not made with hands."

¹ Mark xiv, 36.

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This, of course, meant the destruction of the Jewish religion, and, according to Jewish law, was punishable with death. The witnesses, however, could not agree, and the charge was thus without legal verification. Jesus Himself refuses to explain the meaning of His own words. Caiaphas determines to bring matters to a head by convicting the prisoner out of His own mouth. Placing himself before Him, he put to Him the fateful question: "Art Thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" Jesus replies in words that seal His doom: "I am. And ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power and coming with the clouds of Heaven."¹ No further evidence was needed. It was rank blasphemy and the punishment was death. But the death sentence could not be carried out by the men who pronounced it. Since the year 7 B.C. the heir of Herod the Great had been deposed, and Judea and Samaria were under the Roman provincial government.

¹ Mark xiv, 61, 62.

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Hence it was necessary to hand Jesus over to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, who was at that time in Jerusalem to keep the peace among the Passover pilgrims. The charge brought against Him before Pilate, however, was not blasphemy, which would have had no weight before a Roman tribunal, but sedition against the Emperor. Pilate at first tried to save the prisoner, finding in Him only a harmless enthusiast. But (it would seem) partly through fear, partly through desire to gain popularity with the Jews, he sacrificed Jesus, and delivered Him to the soldiery to be crucified. Jesus was nailed to the Cross about nine o'clock on Friday morning, but whether this Friday was the 14th or 15th Nisan we cannot be certain. He refused a narcotic drug of spiced wine, that He might meet the last agony with undulled consciousness. At three o'clock in the afternoon He cried with a loud voice, a cry which in the very dialect He used still resounds in history: "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani.*" The year of His

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death was about the year 30. His body was taken down from the Cross on Friday evening by one Joseph of Arimathea, a pious Jew, who placed it in a tomb hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone against the entrance.

A great modern biographer of Jesus has truly said "that every other human life has finished with the earth at death, and it is an axiom of both ancient and modern mankind that the dead do not rise again. . . . Tradition makes a difference in the case of Jesus. To Him there was deliverance from death upon the earth itself, and when He departed His posthumous influence also became a perpetual one."¹ What we know about Jesus, then, is not bounded by His death, but passes beyond it. When we consult our earliest sources, Mark unhappily fails us, for it breaks off suddenly at the point when the women come to the tomb hewn out of the rock on Easter morning, to find, to their fear and

¹ Keim: *Jesus of Nazara*, Vol. VI, pp. 274, 275.

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amazement, that it is empty. The earliest of all our sources, however, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, tells us that Jesus appeared first to Peter, a statement subtly corroborated by various allusions in the Gospels; then to the Twelve; then to more than 500 brethren; then to James, the Lord's brother; then to a larger group called "all the Apostles," and finally, to Paul himself. That in these appearances we have genuine experiences, historical criticism no longer allows us to doubt. Differences of opinion, however, emerge when the question is raised, Were these appearances real? that is, did they correspond to some objective phenomena, or are they to be explained as purely psychological in character, visions beginning and ending in the minds of the percipients? It will always be possible to explain them in this latter sense. Whether we do so or no depends on the presuppositions which we bring to the history. If we already believe that not death, but life, is the ultimate fact of the universe,

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if we give weight to the testimony of the Apostles that they had seen the risen Lord, to the undisputed fact that the Church was founded on the Resurrection faith, to the further fact that a profound revolution was wrought in the mood and conduct of the disciples within a few days of the Crucifixion, to the agreement on this point between the Gospel of Paul and the Gospel of the Galilean Apostles, which differ in other respects, to the universality of the belief in the Risen Christ ten years or so after His death by a multitude of Christian churches scattered throughout a vast geographical area, to the influence of this faith still in the modern world—if we give due weight to these considerations it will be hard to resist the conclusion that the Jesus who was put to death on the Cross and laid in the grave, recrossed the barriers that separate the world beyond from this, to bring hope and strength to His discouraged followers, and to send forth His religion on its world-conquering errand. We

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cannot be said to *know* this as we know the facts of His incarnate life, but we may well believe it without laying ourselves open to the charge of credulity or superstition.

CHAPTER III

WHAT IS THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION? ¹

It is no exaggeration to say that this is the question of the hour. Various causes, speculative and practical, have conspired to force it on the attention of the modern world. The Christian apologist finds his science discredited, for he is uncertain what elements in the complex structure of historical Christianity he is really concerned to defend as vital and what to abandon as accidental. The student of comparative religion, who sees in Christianity but one if also the highest form of the religious principle, is compelled to go behind institutions and dogma to their inner essence, the experiences which gave them birth, in order that he may fix the place of

¹I desire to express my indebtedness for some thoughts in this chapter to Wobbermin's Essay in *Beiträge zur Weiterentwicklung der christlichen Religion*.

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Christianity in the religious development of humanity. The missionary, aware that our present ecclesiastical systems grew up ages before the emergence of the great idea that religion is a human quality, belongs to man as man, is anxious to set free the central realities of the Christian faith from the traditions that have grown around them, in order that these realities may enter into and possess the thought forms of the Oriental mind. The preacher, who has to face from Sunday to Sunday a questioning and critical audience, is concerned to search for the things that cannot be shaken, in order that the forces of Christian enthusiasm and devotion may find free scope for their energies. Everywhere men are crying for a religion reduced to its simplest terms. People are weary of the burden of theological doctrines and the punctilios of ritual. They are asking for something permanent, something verifiable in experience, something, therefore, which no criticism can touch and no

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progress in culture can wither. In a word, they want to know what Christianity really is. Sometimes the answer to this demand for simplification does not satisfy, because it omits or weakens those elements in religion which constitute its very being. Recently a highly educated American layman has sketched the probable future of religion, in a pronouncement from which it would appear that religion will gradually transform itself into a humanitarian and ethical ideal.¹ But the distinguished lecturer would have done well had he started out by asking, "What is religion? and more especially, what is the Christian religion?" He would then have seen that, though ethics is an essential element in Christianity, as in all the higher religions, it can never be a substitute for the religious feeling which passes from this world and its interests to a world beyond, to a Power which can sustain the soul and guarantee to it per-

¹C. W. Eliot: *The Religion of the Future*.

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manence and satisfaction amid the tasks and discouragements of time.

What is Christianity? Innocent though the question sounds, it is among the most difficult and delicate the theologian can be called upon to face, for Christianity stands first among religions in many-sidedness, in elasticity, in capacity to assume different forms, to pass through the most diverse vicissitudes, and to undergo the greatest transformations. Its history is full of romantic surprises. It has continually achieved the impossible. Born on Semitic soil, it soon goes forth into the Græco-Roman world, where in the second century it forms an alliance with Greek philosophy, which lays permanent marks upon it. The fourth century sees it heir to the Roman empire, and all the manifold influences of the greatest civilisation of the ancient world play upon it. And when the Empire perishes, and the new peoples of the north build on its ruins, Christianity survives the catastrophe and

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enters on a new lease of life. This life at a later time is threatened with secularising influences; but it creates the Reformation and clothes itself with fresh power and vigor, and when, later still, Protestantism itself falls into bondage to the letter, Puritanism would rule men once more through the "weak and beggarly" elements of the Old Testament. Modern scholars have taken the veil from off the face of Revelation that the true glory of Christianity might appear. Nor is the history of the Christian religion finished yet. To-day we see it more and more appropriating the great product of the modern spirit, those forms of organised energy based on observation and experiment. We are, moreover, witnessing an outburst of missionary enthusiasm; and we may be sure that when Japan and China are Christianised we shall have not a weak imitation of American or English Christianity, but new and unsuspected developments of the spiritual reserves of the Gospel. As one takes

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a comprehensive glance at the history of this faith, three things strike him with astonishment. The first is its power to shake itself free from all national and tribal limitations. And the second is its apparently infinite capacity to renew itself, to emerge out of dark pits of corruption and degradation into light and purity and increased spiritual energy. The third is its power to create different forms for itself, and to use the spiritual and mental peculiarities of different peoples in the creation of these forms. But it is just these capacities and aptitudes of the religion which almost tempt us to give up in despair the possibility of ever reaching the ultimate reality, that which constitutes the essence of this greatest phenomenon in history. And yet if in the spiritual world things are as Christianity says they are, if it is the embodiment of what is real, and not the empty echo of man's hopes and fears, then we are justified in distinguishing between the Divine revelation as permanent,

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and the many interpretations of that revelation as in their nature transitory and temporary. Great as are the systems to which Christianity has given birth, Christianity itself is still greater.

When we turn to the students of religion, we are met with a bewildering variety of answers to this simple question. The sceptical historian sees in the Christian religion only a manifestation of the higher spirit of Judaism; its love of charity, its faith in the future of humanity, its joy of heart.¹ The social anarchist sees in the Sermon on the Mount, as summed up in the saying "Resist not evil," the heart of Christ's message and a principle in radical opposition to the bases of modern civilisation.² The social reformer sees in Christianity a message of hope to the poor and the oppressed, and the deathblow of capitalistic

¹ Renan: *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 17.

² Tolstoi: *Christ's Christianity*. Eng. trans. Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., London, 1885. Pp. 106-201.

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tyranny, Jesus being the ideal Socialist.¹ The philosophical idealist views Christianity as the culmination of an age-long religious process in which the Infinite reveals itself in and to the finite, thereby bringing to explicit expression a motive power which had been at work all along in the human mind and which underlies all religions as their principle.² The modern liberal Protestant finds the simple and naked essence of the Christian principle in the soul of Jesus as a consciousness or intuition of God as Father and of humanity as His children.³ The Catholic Modernist holds that the liberal Protestant dresses the Christian religion in his own modern ethical religious ideas and then passes it off as the genuine historical article. On the contrary, Jesus Christ refuses to be modernised. He is the Eternal

¹ Naumann: *Was heisst Christlich-Sozial?*

² Caird: *Evolution of Religion*, Vol. I, pp. 36-83; Vol. II, pp. 142-171.

³ Harnack: *Das Wesen des Christentums*, p. 44, (*What is Christianity?* p. 63). Foster: *The Finality of the Christian Religion*, pp. 480-518.

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Spirit in human flesh, recreating Himself in every man through the Church, the Gospel, and the Sacraments, which form, as it were, a continuation of His incarnate life.¹ The conservative Protestant describes Christianity as the conception or fulfilment of God, the world, and man in Jesus Christ, who is the incarnation of the whole logos of God—of God in so far as He is communicable.²

Perplexed by these conflicting voices, we are perhaps tempted to give up the problem in despair. And yet we may take it as certain that any intelligent reader of the New Testament who is prepared to exercise the necessary pains can find out for himself what the essential note of Christianity is. It is true that for a complete and scientifically reasoned solution of the problem it would be necessary not only to survey the whole of Christianity, but also to set it in

¹ Tyrrell: *Christianity at the Cross-roads*.

² DuBose: *The Gospel in the Gospels*, p. 279.

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relation to other religions, so as to mark the elements it has in common with them, as well as the qualities which put it by itself. If we were shut up to this mode of procedure, it is evident that only trained specialists could arrive at any conclusions worth considering; and we would then have the curious paradox that the great majority of those who profess the Christian name do not know what their profession really means. As a matter of fact, however, we can arrive at an answer which meets all practical necessities, by an examination of the documents which have come down to us in the New Testament and which record the religious impression which Jesus Christ made upon the minds of His disciples and followers. Here we see the Christian religion coming to a consciousness of itself over against Judaism on the one hand and paganism on the other.

We speak of Christ as the "Founder" of Christianity, and, if we know what we

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mean in so speaking, the word will do no great harm. Nevertheless, if taken in its strict sense, it is too mechanical and external to express adequately the relation of Jesus to His religion. Institutes are founded, but religions grow. The religion does not spring from Him, full-made, as Minerva from the head of Jupiter. It develops a worship, prescribed formulas, a belief, an extensive literature. Hence the teaching of Jesus alone cannot constitute the sum and substance of Christianity: first, because this teaching leaves large tracts of life untouched and is related to an historical situation quite foreign to ours; and, secondly, because the Teacher is greater than His words. We must know, then, not only the ruling thoughts of Jesus, but also the impression which His personality made upon the primitive disciples. In a word, we must study not only the first three Gospels, which contain the single, individual features of Christ's mission, but we must study also the letters of

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Paul and the Fourth Gospel, in which we have the spiritual interpretation of Christ's earthly history, and in which we see the religious experience of the first disciples taking shape under the influence of the person of Jesus. We can keep clear of all controverted questions as to the authorship and historical character of the Fourth Gospel. It is enough for our purpose to acknowledge what is universally admitted, that it reflects the experiences, feelings, and thoughts of the Apostolic age.

When we open the New Testament we read much that does not relate directly to our quest. We need a clue so that we may find our way speedily to the goal. What is this clue? It is to be found in the nature of the revelation of the world of spirit which the Christian religion professes to make. Every religion assumes the existence of a world of power and life lying beyond this present world and able to give to man what this world cannot give. One of the roots

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of religion is a sense of unrest, a haunting consciousness of evil, a lack of inward peace. Religion opens man's eyes to another world where he can find the things denied him here; and the spiritual worth of a religion lies in the nature of the revelation which it brings, and in the way in which it connects man with the world beyond. The religion of Buddha, for example, reveals the utter hollowness of the natural life, its essential evil, and points to a moral world order, in submission to which redemption is achieved. This is the revelation which Buddhism makes of the spiritual world. And so, too, with all other religions, even the lowest and the coarsest. We shall find, then, the distinguishing note of the Christian religion when we ask—*what is its revelation of the spiritual order?* Recent investigation has established beyond doubt that the religion of Christ arose in connection with late Jewish hopes of the end of the age and the ushering in of a Messianic Kingdom. The new religion took over from

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the old, belief in one living personal God, faith in a Kingdom yet to come. Yet these ideas are transformed and transfigured ere they enter as elements into Christianity. What was it that set them on fire and gave them power to move the souls of men and to create the new phenomenon which we call the Christian Religion? There is but one answer. It was Jesus Christ. The tradition of the first three Gospels, which preserves the most authentic account of His actual words, reveal Him as one governed by the conviction that God is His Father, and that He lives in God as His Son. There is no question here of metaphysics. It is a religious relation, a state of feeling, an attitude of will. The reality of God as His Father is so overwhelming that His consciousness of it marks Him out as standing in a unique relation to God. He knows Himself to be God's final Messenger, and as God's Son, after Him none greater can arise. He closes the temporal order of things and inaugu-

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rates an order that is eternal.¹ He alone is able to apprehend the Father and His purposes, and the Father alone apprehends the fulness of the Son's inner life; and, because of this mutual blending of His life with the life of God, He is able to communicate the love of God as Father to men.² Jesus is not, then, the "First Christian," as the popular saying goes, for there is a unique element in His consciousness which cannot be transferred to others. He illustrates perfectly in His own person what His religion is to realise progressively through the reaches of history. Man's sonship is imperfect, inadequate, dependent; His is perfect, ideal, archetypal; the latter is that the former may be. Christ Jesus, because He is

¹ *Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen.* Mark xii, 1-12; Luke xx, 9-18; Matthew xxi, 33-44.

² Matthew xi, 27; Luke x, 22. In a passage which Professor Schmiedel specially honours as one of "the foundation pillars of a really scientific life of Jesus," we have an ascending series of spiritual existences at the head of which Jesus places Himself. Speaking of the day and hour of the end of the world, He declares that they are not known even to Him.

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God's Son in perfection, is able to awaken sonship in man. Hence His entire ministry is dominated by His purpose, whether in teaching or in healing, to awaken in man the dormant capacity for sonship. The greatest of all His parables, the Parable of the Prodigal Son, is the finest illustration of how He sought to achieve His gracious aim.

So much for the first three Gospels. Let us now turn to St. Paul. No doubt the great apostle was a Jew before he became a Christian, and carried with him into the new faith many Jewish ideas, modes of thought, and forms of argument. But the important question is—What is the motive power, the vital principle, which animates his entire construction of ideas? It is the Sonship of Jesus Christ. In that consecrated hour when on the road to Damascus "his only hate" was transformed into "his only love," he experienced a change which in after years he described as a revelation within him of Jesus Christ as the Son of

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God.¹ The God in whom he believed was a God who sent forth His Son that He might bring men into the blessedness and glory of the filial spirit.² This is the characteristic mark of Christian as distinguished from Jewish or pagan piety—a consciousness of freedom, of victory over every enemy of the spiritual life through the new-found sense of sonship to God which Jesus Christ had awakened within the soul. The first Christian apology is a hymn in honour of Jesus Christ who, as God's Son, makes an end of the old order with its angelic mediators, sensuous sacrifices, legal institutions, venerable symbolisms, and inaugurates the new era, the characteristic note of which is access to and filial fellowship with the Father. One of the great structural ideas of the Fourth Gospel is that in Jesus Christ men find God and know Him as their Father. Christ's words to Philip in his farewell dis-

¹ Galatians i, 12.

² Romans viii, 3; Galatians iv, 5.

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course, if historical, have an obvious significance. If not historical, they at least express the impression which the Master had made on the Christians of the first century. "Philip saith unto Him, 'Lord, show us the Father and it sufficeth us.' Jesus saith unto him: 'Have I been so long time with you and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father, and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?' " ¹ In these words is expressed the revolution which had taken place in the thoughts of the disciples about God through the revelation which they had witnessed in the words and deeds, in the whole earthly history of Jesus. For now the revelation of Judaism, which knew God as the Holy One, lifted above nature, infinitely powerful, terribly majestic, Who issues His commands to His creatures and visits disobedience with awful penalties, is superseded by another and a higher word. This God of later Judaism

¹ John xiv, 8, 9.

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now discloses His real and inmost being as Love, whose quality it is not only to command the good, but to give the power to fulfil it; not only to punish sin, but also to use the punishment as a means by which sin may be overcome. In this revelation of God a new epoch dawned in the spiritual history of man. For the first time the human heart finds perfect rest in God. But this revelation threw a light on the being of the Revealer. Where did He learn this great new thought of God? He discovered it in the depths of His own soul. But such a thought could only have sprung out of a nature absolutely pure, perfectly loving. All other men, even the greatest of the prophets, had dimmed their vision of the Eternal by the shadows of their own inward world; but no shadow rested on the glory of God as it broke on the perfect soul of Jesus. Hence He might well be called by way of pre-eminence the Son of God. It is this proof of Christ's unique Sonship that the Church en-

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deavours to preserve in her creeds and teaching. To many minds to-day the language of these creeds sounds foreign and unreal. The phrases used in the Church's worship do not find them. Yet such persons should seek to penetrate beneath the phrases to their essential thought, which is that Jesus is the supreme Revealer of God and the ideal humanity. Without this conviction our Gospel lacks the note of certainty. Such a conviction gives force and energy to Christian living and puts a soul into Christian morality. We feel we are on the bedrock of truth, of the ultimately real. Then for us the words of Christ are eternal. His ideas have the promise of the future. His programme is the world-programme. Hence we can fling ourselves with untrammelled energy into the service of man, knowing that in loving and in serving Christ, in causing His ideas and influence to prevail, we are best loving and serving humanity.

The revelation of love as the ultimate prin-

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ciple of the universe would have been incomplete had it stayed at the words and acts of Christ. One of the essential elements in the Gospel from the very first was the vicarious death of Jesus as a manifestation of the love of God. That death indeed was felt at first to be in need of an apology and could be tolerated only in the light of the reflection that He who died rose again into life and glory; but after a little it took on a glory of its own as the culmination of a sacrificial career, the highest moment of a redeeming activity. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."¹ "God commendeth His love toward us in that when we were yet sinners Christ died for us."² How was it that this wonderful conviction entered the mind of the first Christian age? The answer is to be found partly, at least, in the fact that the first disciples knew the death of Jesus to be a voluntary act. When we turn

¹ John xv, 13.

² Romans v, 8.

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to the earlier Gospels we see that from the first announcement of Jesus that He was the Messiah, the thought of suffering took a prominent place in His mind. We see, too, that at a certain moment He resolved to die, in the belief that only through His death could His work for those who trusted Him be achieved. As He sets His face steadfastly to go up to Jerusalem His disciples follow Him, amazed and afraid. They surmise His great and tragic purpose. It was to give His life a ransom for many. In the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen¹ the death of the master's son at the hands of the husbandmen prefigures His own death at the hands of the ecclesiastical leaders; but just as in the Parable the death of the son led to the end of the old order of things and the ushering in of a new, so His own death will work the overthrow of evil and at the same time establish the Kingdom of God. Thus His death is not something into which He falls

¹ Mark xii, 1-12.

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accidentally; it is rather a moral achievement. This, then, may be taken to be one of the surest results of historical enquiry—that the death of Jesus was at once voluntary and vicarious. “Jesus went to His death,” says Professor Burkitt, “believing that by so doing He was bringing in the Kingdom of God.”¹ “In the secret of His passion,” says Dr. Schweitzer, “which Jesus reveals to the disciples at Cæsarea Philippi, the pre-Messianic tribulation is for others set aside, abolished, concentrated upon Himself alone and that in the form that they are fulfilled in His own passion and death at Jerusalem. That was the new conviction that had dawned upon Him. He must suffer for others that the Kingdom might come.”² The thought of the vicariousness and voluntariness of Christ’s death seized the apostolic mind with the force of a revela-

¹ *The Transactions of the Third International Congress of the History of Religions*, Vol. II, p. 328.

² *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, pp. 386, 387.

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tion. Christ convinced His followers that He had power to lay down His life and power to take it again and that no man could take it from Him.¹ And this laying down of His life was an atoning deed. His body was broken and His blood was shed for many. His death, then, enters as an essential element into the faith He has created. It is the culminating revelation of God's love in conflict with human crime and passion.

But this is not all. Christianity is built on the conviction that Jesus Christ conquered death and entered into an unbroken fellowship of life with God. The Lordship of Jesus sums up the earlier Christian creed. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."² In the Resurrection we have a revelation of immortal life as the destiny for which man was created. The first Christians knew themselves destined for

¹ John x, 17.

² Romans x, 9.

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eternal blessedness, because Jesus Christ had conquered death and had risen into life and glory. Think as we may of the traditions of the great Event, here is something which cannot be gainsaid. The great dynamic force which created the Church and gave it the victory was the conviction that the Crucified has been raised out of darkness and shame and set at the right hand of God. It is the figure of a risen, victorious Christ which dominates the pages of the New Testament. Christianity is what it is because at its centre lives the personality of its Creator.

But this supreme revelation of God in the person of Jesus is bound up with a new morality. It is not that in Christianity religion and ethics lie side by side. It is that they penetrate each other so perfectly that to-day we cannot think of a truly religious man who is not at the same time a truly moral man. In His own person Jesus has shown us that the religious and moral life

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are not two different vital activities. They are rather two different forms of the same spiritual functioning. They are one and the same vital activity, only directed now toward God and again toward man. And this unity of the religious and ethical elements in experience springs out of the revelation of the eternal love of God in life and work, in the suffering unto death and in the victory over death of Jesus Christ. God is now seen to be love. But this, which is the life of God, is the highest life of man. Only as man loves does he live. "Nothing is original," says Father Tyrrell, "in the righteousness preached by Jesus."¹ It is true that the majority of His ethical commands can be paralleled in the writings of Greek sages and Old Testament Prophets, so that in a sense we may say all is old. Yet in another sense, all is new. For now these commands are so connected with the profoundest springs of the spiritual life that they cease to be com-

¹ *Christianity at the Cross-roads*, p. 51.

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mands and become the natural and spontaneous expression of the religious consciousness. The great achievement of Christ is that henceforth religion by itself is imperfect. Its end is the blessing and the redemption—moral, social, and physical—of humanity. It is this that makes the Christian religion a new and at the same time a unique phenomenon. Here there is no religious feeling which does not of necessity translate itself into moral action; and there is no morality which does not draw its motive power out of religious faith and which does not at the same time by way of reaction deepen this faith.

Christianity, then, centres in the person of Jesus Christ. Through Him we gain certainty as to the nature of God and the assurance that in some way good must be the final goal of ill. The heart of things is not cold and dead, but throbs with an infinite pity; man is not the helpless victim of Nature's blind fatalisms, but the child of the Infinite,

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who knows he was not made to die, whose highest good is not at the mercy of time, but lies hidden in the hand of the Eternal. Christ is, as it were, an epitome of the world-programme, and the long reaches of history have as their end the realisation of the ideal order in His person. He creates a new ethical spirit; founds a fellowship of souls, a Kingdom of God, in which the highest energies of the human spirit are organised in harmony with the Divine purpose. And He is and does all this because His person comes out of the basic realities of the universe and is a revelation of ultimate spiritual fact. Other religions are greater than their founders, and in proportion as emphasis is placed upon the founder the religion suffers and retrogrades. It is far otherwise with the Christian religion. If the voice of experience and history has a right to be heard we must maintain that Christ's relation to His Gospel is not accidental, but essential; not contingent, but necessary. As He has been

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its creator, so is He still its providence. Just as our world, divorced for a moment from the all-embracing energies of the immanent God, would fall into chaos and oblivion, so, we may well believe, would Christianity, apart from Jesus Christ as the source of holy inspiration, perish from the hearts and consciences of men. The religion of the future will lie more and more in the realisation of the ethical and spiritual supremacy of Christ in all the manifold spheres of human thought and life.

CHAPTER IV

RELIGION AND MIRACLE

No apology is needed for raising once more the problem of the miraculous and its relation to Christianity. It is an old problem, but it faces us to-day with new emphasis, and clamours for a more adequate solution than any that have hitherto been offered. The Christian apologist, anxious to disengage the essential elements of the faith and commend them to the intellect of the time; the student of comparative religion, who finds wonders springing up at the feet of every great religious personality and who knows that the birth of a religion is always accompanied by an invasion of the supernatural on the natural and accustomed order; the theologian who is anxious to establish a doctrine of revelation true to history and to the nature of the human mind; the

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preacher who is conscious of the present perplexity of Christian thought on this subject and who feels restrained and hampered because he cannot find his way to some clear and credible view; the ordinary cultivated layman, who is troubled because the Christian religion appears to be not only supernatural in the sense of spiritual, but supernatural in the sense of being contrary to nature—all these feel the pressure of the question and are seeking for some relief. The first step in the process of clearing up our thoughts on this matter is to know exactly where we stand in regard to it to-day.

Until within recent years the problem was mainly philosophical or theological. The eighteenth century witnessed a kind of compromise between theology and the intellect of the age. The dominating philosophy admitted the existence of a Deity who created the world, impressed on it a rigid system of laws, and exercised over it a general non-

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miraculous providence. Theology, on its side, admitted the uniformity of nature, but maintained the possibility of a Divine intervention or interference with this uniformity. It was Hume who destroyed this compromise. For him, miracles are logically possible, but practically impossible, because incapable of being substantiated by any evidence. The question he raises is: Have there been events which we are compelled to regard as miracles, that is, as standing outside the law of causality? To this question he replies, "No." Human testimony is fallible and often rests on conscious or unconscious deception: but natural law is not fallible; it is universally valid. Therefore, it is more probable in any given case that the testimony to a miracle is false than that a violation of natural law should have been a fact. This logical puzzle has occupied the attention of agnostic and theological reasoners alike, down to our own time. Most persons will agree that Huxley gets to the heart of

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the matter when he says in his criticism of Hume: "If a dead man did come to life, the fact would be evidence not that any law of nature had been violated, but that those laws, even when they express the results of a very long and uniform experience, are necessarily based on incomplete knowledge, and are to be held only as grounds of more or less justifiable expectation."¹ In other words, the result of the long and weary discussion inaugurated by Hume is that we are too ignorant of the ultimate laws of the universe to assert that a miracle, in apparent violation of these laws, is impossible.

In our own time, the question has acquired a new meaning. One of the ruling ideas of modern thought is the historical method. We are impatient of high *à priori* roads to truth. We regard the value of testimony in a way quite foreign to Hume's mode of thought. In a word, the question of miracle is being transferred from the meta-

¹ *Hume*, p. 131.

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physical to the historical realm. The pre-suppositions of eighteenth-century rationalism no longer trouble us and we are set free to consider the problem calmly and judiciously. Any method which simply lumps together all the miracle stories of the Gospels, without making any distinction between them, either as to the quality of the event described or as to the evidence alleged in its behalf, and proceeds to discharge the whole as unworthy of serious thought, stands discredited beforehand. What we want to know is whether any of these alleged miraculous events have sound evidence in their favour, and if so, whether they may not be interpreted in harmony with modern ideas, even though this interpretation must vary from that of the original narrators.

Before turning, however, to the historical question, let us ask—What is a miracle in the traditional sense? It may be defined as a special intervention in the ordinary course of nature, by which secondary causes are set

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aside by a direct volition of Deity for some special purpose. Miracles, in the traditional belief, are necessary to revelation in order to attest the Divine mission of the prophets or of Jesus Christ, and will be wrought by God with a view to the salvation of men. They were continued through the first three centuries, but then gradually came to an end, as the purpose for which they were wrought, namely, the establishment of the Christian religion, was achieved. This idea, the product of a scholastic theology, is no longer credible to-day. In the first place, the notion is too theoretical and transcendental. It starts with the premise, that God is omnipotent and can do anything, and argues that therefore He has done this or that. Now, of course, the question is not—What can God do? but—What has He actually done? and this can be known only by a critical examination of history, and by the investigation of the facts of nature. In the second place, modern sci-

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ence has as its fundamental postulate the uniformity of law. The deepest conviction of the scientific mind is that there are no mysteries which cannot find an ultimate explanation by some law, known or unknown. It is the function of science to reduce any given phenomenon to its place as a link in a chain, or rather, as an element in an infinitely ramified network which binds it into unity with all the phenomena that precede it and that coexist with it. Hence Le Conte defines miracle as "an occurrence or phenomenon according to a law higher than any we yet know."¹ From this point of view, miracle is rather an event the causes of which we do not know than the result of a Divine intervention. In the third place, modern theology no longer accepts the idea that the function of miracle is to attest the authenticity of a Divine revelation. Here the whole stress is placed upon the element of wonder or of magic, and the inference is

¹ *Evolution and Religious Thought*, p. 356.

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from a physical portent to the truth of moral and religious ideas. Matthew Arnold disposed once and for all of this scholastic notion by his famous remark: "Suppose I could change the pen with which I write this into a penwiper. I should not thus make what I write any truer or more convincing." Most thoughtful persons to-day will recognise that the criterion of any truth must be found in the truth itself. In other words, ethical truth is self-luminous. It shows its reality by its correspondence to the ethical needs of man, by the mighty changes it has wrought in the individual and in society, by the fact that in proportion as it is realised, man rises in the scale of being and of worth.

Having cleared the ground, then, of the traditional view, we are in a position to turn to the Gospel records which contain the miracle histories in which our chief interest is centred.

Since the publication of Strauss's *Life of*

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Jesus, in 1835, there has been a succession of theories seeking to show how the Gospel tradition was formed and what the sources are on which the Evangelists relied. We set aside here the Fourth Gospel, as, on any hypothesis, it stands by itself and cannot be taken as a primary authority for the life of Jesus. One of the indubitable results of critical inquiry has been, as I have tried to show, to exalt the general historical trustworthiness of the synoptic tradition, to assure us that in this tradition we have a genuine picture of Jesus as He lived and moved among men. When due emphasis is given to this fact, it may be frankly conceded that there are a few elements in the Gospels due, no doubt, to the influence of legend, to unconscious accretion, to the ideas and preoccupations of the primitive Christian community as to what Jesus must have said and done. The point which I desire to emphasize is that on any critical theory of the Gospels, stories of miracles en-

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ter into the earliest discoverable literary strata and cannot be got rid of without dissolving the history into myth. Let us, for example, take the latest critical hypothesis and one which has gained the support of the great majority of New Testament scholars to-day. This view, in brief, is that our present synoptic Gospels have as their literary groundwork two documents: (1) The Gospel of Mark, which is to be identified substantially if not in detail with our present canonical Gospel; (2) A Collection of Sayings or Discourses, which comprises the matter common to Luke and Matthew, but not found in the second Gospel, and which in its original form was probably set down in Aramaic. These two sources, it is generally agreed, were in writing before the year 70. Attempts at reconstruction of the Logia, or "Collection of Sayings," have been recently made, notably one by Harnack.¹ Now in this

¹ *The Sayings of Jesus the Second Source of St. Matthew and St. Luke* (1908), pp. 252-271.

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“Collection of Sayings,” which is concerned not with the deeds but with the words of Jesus, we have, nevertheless, a detailed account of a miracle which has provoked unnecessary scepticism, namely, the healing at a distance of the Centurion’s servant and an allusion to the cure of a dumb demoniac. These anecdotes are all the more significant, as the motive for their introduction is not to call attention to, much less to magnify Christ’s miracle-working power: but in the one case to give an illustration of extraordinary faith on the part of a Gentile, and in the other to show that the overthrow of evil by the expulsion of demons, was evidence that the Kingdom of God had really come. We have in the same source His message to John the Baptist: “Go tell John what ye hear and see; the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up and the poor have good tidings preached to them.” Further, we have the woes pro-

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nounced on Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, because of their failure to read the lesson of His mighty works done in them. Let us now turn to the Mark Gospel. Here, if we take the Gospel as it has come down to us, we find eighteen miracle histories. These eighteen are reduced to sixteen if we suppose with the majority of scholars that the "Cursing of the Fig-Tree" is a misunderstood or pragmatized Parable, and the "Feeding of the Four Thousand" a duplicate of the "Feeding of the Five Thousand." It is significant that of the sixteen miracles in the second Gospel thirteen are wonders of healing, and of the three remaining only one presents serious difficulties: namely, "The Feeding of the Five Thousand."

There is a small group of scholars who think that our canonical Gospel of Mark can be analysed into an earlier tradition resting on Peter, worked over by a later editor. Now if, for the moment, we accept this hy-

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pothesis we find in the original Petrine tradition five miracle stories:

- The healing of Peter's mother-in-law;
- The healing of the paralytic in Capernaum;
- The stilling of the storm;
- The healing of the woman with an issue of blood;
- The raising of Jairus's daughter.

Thus the latest criticism vindicates the remark of Theodor Keim: "It is the genuine historical Jesus who is here exhibiting His compassion towards the needy, is indignant at the power of the evil one, and is constrained to put forth His healing virtue, works fundamentally by His spiritual word, and requires spiritual faith, and finally imposes silence upon those who are healed. This is a Jesus such as that sensuous, miracle-seeking age could scarcely have invented."¹

Let us now ask,—What, according to the earliest sources, is our Lord's own attitude

¹ *Jesus of Nazara*, Vol. III, p. 172.

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to miracles? We have the answer in a saying which is found in the Logia and which even Schmiedel admits to be unquestionably genuine: "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign and a sign shall not be given to it except the sign of Jonah, for as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of Man be to this generation."¹ Christ appeals to the signs and wonders which He wrought and yet refuses to have a miracle wrung from Him by His generation, declines to pander to the crude supernaturalism which could find God only in the portents of magic. As Jonah, the preacher of repentance, was a sign to the men of Nineveh, so His preaching of the Kingdom of God was a sign to the men of Palestine. It spoke not to the childish and superstitious love of marvels, but to the intuitions of reason and of conscience. Thus it is clear that, as Sabatier says: "Prodigy properly so called, is quite foreign to the

¹ See Harnack: *The Sayings of Jesus*, p. 266.

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wholly moral conduct of His life and to the strictly religious conception of His work. He did not found His religion on Miracle, but on the light, the consolation, the pardon, and the joy which His Gospel, issuing from His holy living, brought to broken and repentant souls.”¹ So far from wishing to gain power or influence through His miracles, He forbade those who were healed to talk about the cure, and He attributed the cure not to Himself, but to the faith of the cured. On the other hand, that He wrought what were then deemed miracles is a fact based as we have seen on the rock of genuine history. Renan admits His wonder-working activity, but thinks that it was a rôle imposed on Him by the men of His time and place against His will and better judgment. The apology is an insult—a gratuitous defence of what needs no defence, but rather wins our reverence and our honour. Jesus gave Himself to His healing work with all

¹ *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion*. Eng. trans., p. 73.

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the energy of His soul, in glad abandon. Wherever He went, the despairing revived, the miserable found some surcease of pain, cries of joy and gratitude filled His ears and made music in His heart. What diviner work could Jesus have done? He loved the sick and the wretched with infinite love, and therefore He healed them. His attitude toward the miracles is thus seen to be discriminating and judicious. He works miracles indeed, but only in the interests of suffering humanity and out of a God-like pity. He works no miracle that would contribute to falsity, to superstition, or to idle curiosity. It has been said—and the saying is in a sense true—that “if all the miracles were gone the vision of Jesus would remain.”¹ But would not the vision of Jesus be immeasurably impoverished if the deeds through which shine His deep compassion for the sufferings of humanity should turn out to be nothing more than a halo of glory

¹ Gordon: *Religion and Miracle*, p. 85.

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created by the love of a later age? The personalities who have powerfully affected the world have not been merely thinkers and teachers: they have been also workers and sufferers. Without His works of compassion in the healing of the diseased, one of the divinest aspects of Jesus' character would be lost.

The last question on which a few words must be said is,—What must be the attitude of educated men to-day to the miracle stories of the Gospels? When we examine the material given in the two primary sources, the Mark Gospel and the “Collection of Sayings,” we note that the eighteen miracles reported may be divided into four classes:

- (1) Ordinary acts of healing;
- (2) Expulsion of demons;
- (3) Raising of the dead;
- (4) Miracles wrought on nature.

Fourteen of these stories belong to the first two classes,—miracles of healing, mental and physical. These deeds of mercy are thus seen to be the most characteristic of Christ

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and the most frequent in His career. They are, at the same time, most in accord with well-known analogies in modern experience. The old view of the relation of mind and body which could permit Huxley to say that our consciousness can no more affect our physical life than a steam-whistle can run a locomotive, raises a smile to-day. The history of medicine, every psychological clinic in the world, contradicts it. Every neurologist knows that in the great class of disorders where moral and psychic factors are at work, it is impossible to exaggerate the uplifting and unifying influence of personality. We have but to keep this in mind, and then think of the matchless vital endowment with which the Lord Jesus came into the world, to find the inference most credible that the unique psychical quality of that life should have unique psychical and psycho-physical results. There is an indirect but weighty confirmation of this view in the fact that the influence of His personality is not portrayed

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as working magically or without regard to law, for it demands as the psychological medium for its healing power faith on the part of the sufferer, or of his friends, or of both. In Nazareth, Mark tells us, He could do no mighty work because of their unbelief. The educated physician of to-day knows that the faith of his patient, whatever the nature of the disease may be, is one of the most powerful allies that he can count upon; and the reason is because faith is not a mere abstract intellectual assent, but has an emotional tone, implies the feeling of trust, confidence, expectation—which, absorbing the whole mind, contributes to the right functioning of the psycho-physical organism.

To the same category belongs the expulsion of demons. The theologian and the student of medicine are pretty generally agreed that in every case of demon possession described in the New Testament there is to be recognised some well-known form of nervous or mental disease. The lunatic boy at

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the foot of the Mount of Transfiguration presents all the symptoms of an epileptic. The "man with an unclean spirit" in the synagogue of Capernaum reflects all the marks of a dissociated personality, such as are characteristic of acute hysteria. And the same theory explains the case of the demoniac of Gerasa. It was natural that in an age when the belief in demons was widespread and the science of abnormal psychology as yet unborn, people who perceived the strange and inexplicable alteration in the thought and speech and conduct of their friends should conclude that this was owing to the presence of a foreign and evil spirit. It was in dealing with these unhappy victims of mental disturbance that Jesus was especially successful, though He claimed no monopoly of the healing gift. The restoration of the diseased to their normal selves, the destruction of the evil power which enslaved them, was for Jesus a most significant sign of the presence and power of the Kingdom of God.

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These relative miracles, if so we may call them, are finding more and more acceptance with the most enlightened theologians of our time. Their general attitude is well summed up by Professor Wernle when he says: "In the Gospels Jesus appears before us first of all as the physician of men's bodies, as the redeemer of the sick and suffering. However great the number of miraculous narratives that we set on one side as exaggerations or inventions of a later age, a nucleus of solid fact remains with which we have to deal. Jesus possessed a healing power strictly limited, it is true, by unbelief, but capable of producing the very greatest physical and psychical changes wherever He encountered faith. This power operated especially in the case of mental diseases, but was by no means confined to them."¹ The story of the raising of Jairus's daughter, when carefully examined, does not compel us

¹ *The Beginnings of Christianity*, Vol. I. (Eng. trans.) p. 97.

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to find in it an instance of resurrection from the dead. It may well have been that the disciples so regarded it, just as the eye-witnesses of the accident which befell Eutychus and his restoration to health, recorded in the Acts, assumed that the young man was dead, in spite of Paul's words, "Trouble not yourselves, for his life is in him."¹ But the word of Jesus, which Luke represents as having been spoken after His entrance into the chamber, is decisive, "The child is not dead, but sleepeth."² Here we have a case of resuscitation from a trance, not resurrection from the spirit world. And this view is confirmed by the realistic touch of Christ's direction that the child should be given some food.

The so-called "nature miracles" stand in a class by themselves. They are few in number,³ and are not of equal religious sig-

¹ Acts xx, 9, 10.

² Mark v, 39.

³ Those in the primary sources are: The Feeding of the Five Thousand, The Walking on the Sea, and The Stilling of the Tempest.

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nificance with those to which no reasonable objection can be made. As Professor Sanday remarks, "many a loyal Christian accepts them as they stand, but with a note of interrogation." If they are to enter into our modern knowledge they must be conceived of in terms of our modern consciousness, and it may be that it is reserved for still further study to discover the substantial kernel of fact which lies within the shell of the narratives as they have come down to us. The most important of the "nature miracles" is the Feeding of the Five Thousand. It may be that the explanation of this wonder is to be found in the outburst of brotherly generosity provoked by the example of Jesus, so that each was able to share in the other's good. Or it may be that, as A. Schweitzer has recently explained, Jesus used the food which He and His disciples had brought with them, as the elements of a sacramental, Messianic meal, so that every one received a little after He had pronounced

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a blessing. This explanation finds some support in the Messianic prophecy of the Old Testament of a feast or banquet which should be one of the accompaniments of the Messianic kingdom. There are some who will object,—In thus relating miracle to the idea of law does not the essence of the matter evaporate? Is not the *raison d'être* of a miracle its quality of indicating God's personal care for the individual? And if the upshot of the discussion is simply to leave us face to face with a network of laws, have we not lost something which our fathers had—a proof of the presence and power of a personal God in the world? This is a feeling which disturbs earnest minds at the present time, and it springs out of a truly religious consciousness. The religious man feels that his relations with God must be vital, personal, direct; and in certain moods his imagination conceives of nature rather as a mask which conceals Deity than as an interpreter that reveals Him. Let us try to grapple with

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this difficulty. Suppose we could establish upon the most irrefragable basis the few nature miracles recorded in the Gospels, how could they help us to face those stretches of history and of our own experience where the reign of law is absolute and inviolable? The apparent indifference of nature to man's welfare is the standing rebuke administered by scepticism to the claims of faith. Whatever may have happened in the first century in Galilee, we know, alas! that here and now the pestilence walks at noonday; the earthquake sweeps to the same dreadful end the just and the unjust; the ship foundering on the sunken rock goes down into the swirling waters which drown alike the cries of innocence and of guilt. Such facts are among the difficulties of faith: but the answer to them cannot be found in the events of a far distant past.

Still further, the objection involves a dualism which thought is ever striving to overcome. What are the laws of nature from a

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theistic standpoint but simply the rational principles by which God administers the world? The whole course of nature, as Lotze reminds us, becomes intelligible only by supposing the continual co-activity of God, who mediates the action and reaction going on between atom and atom, element and element. The laws or principles of the Divine action appear to operate uniformly, and thus exclude the notions of irrationality, caprice, or favouritism. In other words, within the limits of time and space, as a mortal being the individual is cared for, but not, it would seem, in a way which would be out of relation to the government of the world as a whole. Civilisation, culture, all the highest fruits of human activity, would be impossible without a stable universe; and the pains and accidents which nature inflicts on man are the price he pays for this stability. If, indeed, the nature and activity of God were exhausted in His legislation for the physical universe there would be room for despair,

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for then nature might well present the aspect of a dark and pitiless fate. But it is one of the great truths of religion that beyond the sphere of the exactitudes of natural law there is an infinite region of spirit and freedom where all souls can meet in personal and unimpeded fellowship with the Father of spirits.

To sum up, the wonder-working activity of Jesus enters into the most primitive elements of the Gospel records. There is, therefore, a good sound historical tradition in their favour. The great majority of these wonders are in accordance with well-established analogies. It is unnecessary, therefore, to assume that these acts are violations of the laws of nature. They may be described as due to the results, extraordinary or abnormal, of laws known or unknown. Moreover, too, they are deeds which are organically related to the character of the worker and show us what manner of being Jesus was. To establish their historical

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soundness is to make the records in which they appear the more worthy of our belief. If we extend our view from the synoptic Gospels to the whole of the New Testament, it will be found that about eighty per cent. of the miracle stories have good historical authority and are in harmony with known analogies. The result of our discussion would seem to show that the true attitude to the stories of miracles in the New Testament is not that of a sceptical dogmatism,—which is even more offensive to a liberal thinker than the dogmatism of faith,—but that of patient inquiry and a reverent waiting for further light. Fifty years ago it was the fashion to reject as utterly incredible many of the stories of Christ's wonder-working power, stories which have since been abundantly and brilliantly vindicated. Hence the wise and cautious scholar will be slow to deny the authenticity of other incidents, in spite of the fact that to these our present knowledge can afford no analysis which we

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to-day accept. May it not be that further study will show to be facts other miracles in the Gospels which we cannot now explain?

CHAPTER V

THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING IN THE LIGHT OF CHRISTIANITY

THE problem of evil stands like a dark and sinister figure barring the path of faith. We are here concerned mainly with physical evil, which, though related to, is not identified with moral evil. Though in experience they intermingle and are sometimes even connected as cause and effect, they belong, nevertheless, to different orders and must not be confused. Ever since man arrived at self-reflection he has grappled with the dreadful fact of suffering. Out of the conflict have come the greatest creations of genius, from the drama of Job and the plays of Æschylus to the Hamlet of Shakespeare. Because of it great religions have arisen and philosophic systems have been created.

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Buddhism, which to-day is the only rival of Christianity, is a theory of the origin and end of suffering. Its four noble truths—Pain, the Origin of Pain, the Destruction of Pain, the Eight-fold Holy Way that leads to the cessation of pain,—sum up the essence of Buddha's creed. In Nirvana the desire to live perishes. With it also perishes pain. Schopenhauer, who represents in the Western world the spirit of Buddhism, sees in pain the only permanent and positive element of experience, while all pleasures are fleeting, arising from the momentary satisfaction of desires that are never really satisfied. Hence his solution of the problem is: Renounce the will to live; exist as one dead to the world; and thus you will be free from the torments which visit those who love or hate or wish.

As the race advances in civilisation, it grows more and more sensitive to suffering, even as it grows more and more capable of suffering. The mystery darkens and deep-

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ens for every thoughtful mind. Scepticism finds in the prevalence, the meaningless distribution, and the frequent uselessness of pain, its strongest argument against the existence of a God perfect in love and power. It is said of Sir Leslie Stephen that he was "a rebel against pain, not on his own account, for he stood his trials well, but in a Promethean man-loving spirit. The sight of the world's tragedy made him an agnostic."¹ There are not a few like him, whose faith has been paralysed by some fell stroke of disease or death.

I wish to look at the question of suffering in the light of the Christian religion. In this light the problem grows in difficulty and complexity. If the world were governed by an impersonal Force or Fate, then stoic resignation, heroic, unfailing endurance would be our truest attitude. But the message of Christ is, as we have seen, that at

¹ W. Barry, quoted by T. I. Hardy, *Gospel of Pain*, p. 40.

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the heart of the universe is love, love in its purest, most selfless form, the love of a Father. It is this love that has called into being every human soul, watches over and sustains and guides it through the shadows of time into a blessed eternity. Lotze has gone to the very heart of Christ's thought of God when he says: "God is the living love that wills the happiness of all being." It is this thought which the Christian cannot let go though it is shaken to its very depths under the heavy blows of trial. His bewilderment and confusion when pain befalls him, so far from being mitigated by the religious traditions of his early training, are really aggravated by them, until in his despair he either abandons his faith or snatches at the latest spiritual nostrum which offers relief by drugging his power to think. Scarcely a day passes that I do not hear the misery-laden questions of men and women: "Why does God send this trouble into my life?" "Why has He made my

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wife an invalid? ” “ Why is my innocent child tortured in the agonies of an incurable disease? ” “ Why did God allow my loved one to be so racked with misery that he could find help only in a self-inflicted death? ” “ Why am I a victim of nervous wretchedness and my life a prolonged conflict with the ghastly phantoms of imagination? ” “ Why has God taken from me the light of my eyes? ” “ Why have misfortune and disappointment dogged my footsteps all through life? ” There are as many questions as there are types of suffering in the world. A brilliant English novelist introduces us to the death-chamber of one of his characters, a pious man trained in the ordinary popular religious traditions. The dying man is discoursing to those about him on his experience of God's dealing with him:

“ God's got a nasty trick of coming back upon us like a thunder-storm. He'll strike and you'll go on your knees and suffer and moan; and then

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you'll think 'tis over and try to settle down and count the cost and make the best of it; but while you're just creeping out cautiously and hoping for better things, He's on the watch and strikes again perhaps and takes all that's left."

"The very image of His ways!" cried Philip.
"And be that a God to worship?"¹

To these bitter questionings two answers are made. The first is as old as the Book of Job. There are physical evils, it is said, but these exist because sin exists. God sends pain to the wicked as a penalty for their transgressions, and to the good man as a chastisement to wean him from some evil which still remains within him. The disciplinary or instrumental theory of pain fails to satisfy. Where is the spiritual discipline, we may well ask, in the abject poverty that crushes intellectual aspiration and makes a worthy human existence impossible, nay, that often erects insurmountable barriers between God and the soul? Tell me how melancholia ministers to the moral needs of its

¹ Eden Philpotts: *The Thief of Virtue*.

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victim who feels that he is lost, an outcast from God, a man damned in this world, and like to be damned in the next. Explain the pedagogy of psychasthenia, which tortures the sufferer with a thousand grotesque, fantasmal fears, turns his life into a web of indecisions, perplexities, senseless impulses, and yet, with diabolic cunning, preserves some area of the mind untouched, so that the sufferer may have the added anguish of knowing that his inner world is out of joint and he is powerless to set it right. And yet pain, in some instances, as observation and experience testify, does strengthen and discipline character. Whether it does so or not, however, depends upon the type of character on which it falls. Throughout every land in Christendom there are institutions built and consecrated to the work of inflicting pain for high moral ends. Let us hear the witness of one who was subjected for a time to this discipline:¹

¹ *The Ballad of Reading Gaol, by C. 33 (Oscar Wilde).*

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“ The vilest deeds like poison weeds
Bloom well in prison air:
It is only what is good in man
That wastes and withers there:
Pale Anguish keeps the heavy gate,
And the Warder is Despair.”

Nevertheless it remains true that in certain instances pain has the power to mature some latent spiritual germ, to touch the human spirit to finer issues of peace and goodness, to turn the limitations and weaknesses of the body into a means of spiritual strength and growth. It is this triumph of the mind over body, of the soul over suffering, that gives evidence of a spiritual life whose roots go down into the invisible and eternal world. It speaks to us of immortality. Pain, then, while in itself an evil, may be transmuted into good.

To-day an ancient attempt to solve the mystery is once more coming into vogue. It has created a new religion and a new Church, which are among the strangest phenomena of the age. Christian Science gets rid of

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the problem by simply denying its existence. Sin and suffering are alike unreal. Deny them, and they cease to be. Do you speak of pulmonary tuberculosis as the work of a micro-organism discovered by one Koch in 1882, which invades the lungs, and sets up a morbid process that unless checked ends in the utter ruin of that organ? "You are suffering from a widespread delusion," responds the Christian Scientist. "The bacillus of which you talk has no existence. It is simply one of the protean forms which Mortal Mind assumes; but Mortal Mind is itself an illusion, a nonentity. The bacillus, therefore, is an illusion of an illusion." It is enough to reply that disease is just as real or as unreal as health, no more and no less. Health is a certain condition of the organism. Disease is a certain other condition. Both are real or unreal. Christian Scientists, to be logical, should deny the reality of both—in which case all argument ceases, and every tongue is paralysed.

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The truth is, reflection convinces us that the ultimate reason of suffering is inscrutable, and we will refuse to juggle with words, or to believe that at last the heart of the mystery has been plucked out. Is relief, then, impossible? Must faith still continue to bear its intolerable burden? On any hypothesis the mystery is dark and terrible enough; but it is made darker and still more terrible by traditional notions that have never been challenged and compelled to give an account of themselves. What hurts the pious heart is not so much the suffering as the sad conviction that it is God who inflicts it, and that not the slightest sign of a purpose or of a rational explanation can be discerned in the infliction. In prayer and hymn and sermon, in our ordinary religious speech and writing, the assumption is that God is directly responsible for all the evil that we suffer. He it is who sends earthquake and fire upon a crowded city, and the aged, the innocent and the helpless are burned to

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death, or driven from their shelter to suffer hardship and misery, to face the tasks of life with impaired faculties and exhausted resources. From Him comes the gale that wrecks the ship and hurls to death her living freight, drowning alike the cries of innocence and of guilt. Enter one of our hospitals and see the gratuitous agony that makes life intolerable, agony that is dry and barren, pain void of all spiritual fruit! Pass into a retreat for the mental wrecks of humanity, and mark how melancholia or mania graves its pitiful anguish on the face; how horror and despair make of human life a hell, turn it into a death in life! Who is responsible for these things? God is the author of all these horrors; and at the very thought the heart faints and fails within us. But let us reflect. Disease and suffering belong to the natural order. They are things of the stage on which the moral drama of our lives is played out, and which we call "Nature." Here we cannot speak of good-

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ness or badness, love or hate, kindness or cruelty. Nature is neither moral nor immoral: she is simply non-moral. Go where you will throughout this universe, from our planet swimming in the wastes of space, to the utmost bounds of Orion and the Pleiades, and you will sink in despairing awe before the manifestations of power and beauty and majesty. But nowhere will you discover the minutest trace of a moral nature, of a heart able to pity or to bless.

“ Lo, these are but the outskirts of His ways:
And how small a whisper do we hear of Him!
But the thunder of His power who can understand? ”¹

Where, then, shall we find a revelation of God's deepest feelings toward us, of his real attitude to pain and misery? First of all, in our own souls. Why is it that we see in suffering a challenge to relieve it? Why does the good physician dislike the word “ incurable ” and inch by inch will fight with death

¹Job xxvi, 14.

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to the bitter end? Why do we cry out at the spectacle of an innocent child writhing in the grasp of some loathsome disorder? It is the great heart of our common nature that so feels and speaks. But whence is this heart? From what deep abyss does this love well up eternally, to face the sin and sorrow and pain of the world? Where are the springs that renew it everlastingly and keep it fresh and pure and strong? Surely the answer is: This love comes out of the Eternal, straight from the great heart of the Father in Heaven, who, in us and through us as His organs, is in everlasting conflict with the evil and the misery that resist His will. If ever we are tempted to doubt God's love, we have but to look into our own hearts when moved by some pure and noble emotion, to find enough to paralyse our scepticism and to fire us with a new and living faith.

Here, then, in the noblest, the most unselfish impulses within us, we are to read God's

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real attitude towards suffering. Whatever the perplexities about its origin and meaning, we must believe that so far from God's being the author of suffering, He stands opposed to it, hates it with a perfect hatred, opposes His infinite energies to it that He may vanquish it; but the God who pities suffers with the being pitied. The larger the love, the more sacrificial it must be. The prophet of the Exile uttered a profounder truth than he suspected when he said, "In all their affliction He was afflicted."¹ Our human tragedy, then, is not played before an idle, or powerless, or indifferent spectator. Rather does He step down from His highest heaven, mingles with the dust and evil of our lower world, shares, in ways incomprehensible to us, in our pain and wretchedness. We can hear, as it were, His consoling voice: "Oh ye who despair, I grieve with you. Yes, it is I who grieve in you. Your sorrow is Mine. No pang of your finitude but is Mine

¹ Isaiah lxiii, 9.

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too; I suffer it all, for all things are Mine; I bear it, and *yet* I triumph.”¹

Is it objected that the ascription of human emotion to the Deity is the baldest anthropomorphism? Well, we must be anthropomorphic if we are to speak of God at all. How can we get outside ourselves and think or speak of God apart from the structural principles of our nature? Whatever super-personal qualities may be in God—and doubtless there are such—there must be also in Him motives of action corresponding to what is highest in our own experience. To say that there are no such motives is to say that God can neither think nor will nor love. Hence the only alternative to belief in a God who sympathises with us and is involved in the vicissitudes of our moral lot is agnosticism—the belief that, though there may be a God, we are forever shut out from knowing anything whatever about Him. Both positions are beliefs and we must decide

¹ Royce: *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy*, p. 470.

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for one or the other. Surely we are justified in deciding for the one that best harmonises our experience, that best ministers to the needs of life.

When we turn to the life and death of the Son of Man we find indeed as little on the doctrine of suffering as on the doctrine of sin. Jesus Christ is no speculative philosopher, no metaphysical thinker, offering a final solution of world problems; and infinite harm has been often done by so conceiving Him. He is the teacher of an ethical religion, and He brings home to men the thought of God in simple human terms. He speaks primarily to man—not the thinker—but the moral personality called to battle with the forces of evil and thereby to achieve his destiny. Take, then, Christ's life and work as a whole, and we see in them, as in a mirror, ultimate spiritual reality, the reflection of a God who hates pain, sickness, and death, as He hates cruelty, meanness, and lust. On the other hand, be it noted, Christ does not ex-

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plain away the fact of suffering after the manner of modern mind-curers. His view is sane, rational, and in close touch with experience. To Him all suffering is a reality, the sign of an evil power at work in the world. But the Divine love is a greater reality, a mighty sun, filling the whole earth with gladness, and consuming with its burning heat the dark clouds of sin and sorrow. Filled with this love, He interprets it to men, not in word only, but also in saving deeds. “ Therefore did He consecrate Himself to the miserable, the sick, and the poor, but not as a moralist, and without a trace of soft sentimentality. He does not divide evils into types and classes. He does not ask whether the sick man deserves to be healed. He is, moreover, far from sympathising with pain or with death. He says nowhere that disease is wholesome and mischief healthy. No—He calls sickness sickness, and health health. All evil, all misery, is to Him something frightful. It belongs

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to the great kingdom of Satan. But He feels the power of the Saviour within Him.”¹ To the eye of Christ, this world is the sphere of two kingdoms—the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of evil. To the kingdom of God belong joy, peace, order, self-control, blessedness, holiness of mind and body; to the kingdom of evil belong sin, pain, disorder, misery, sickness, death. As the founder of God’s kingdom He stands in irrevocable antagonism to the kingdom of evil. Hence He forgave sins; healed the sick; brought peace to the troubled mind; filled the despairing with new hope, and brought to the outcast the companionship of God. Wherever He saw want, physical or moral, it was a challenge to the mighty forces within Him. He lavished freely on human need all the resources of His own peerless nature; and as He did so a new thought of God dawned upon minds long fettered by the bonds of a hard and unspiritual religion. It was as though He

¹ Harnack: *Das Wesen des Christentums*, p. 39.

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would say: "God is not the author of these pains and griefs that burden you. He is life and love, the eternal Source of the healing, blissful, and uplifting energies in the universe. What I do in time and on this earth, God is doing eternally throughout His entire creation. The Father worketh even until now, and I work."¹ But Christ could not cure sorrow without bearing it first upon His own heart. The ages have agreed to call Him "The Man of Sorrows." By a Divine alchemy He turned suffering and trial into an instrument of good, and is Himself the most sublime illustration of how pain, borne vicariously—the pains of the martyr dying for the truth, the tears and sorrows of a mother's heart for her erring son, all the heart-breaking travail of the innocent for the guilty—cease to be evils, become the points at which the soul shines with unearthly glory and shows the God within. In the presence of sorrows such as these we melt in peni-

¹ John v, 17.

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tence; we are cleansed from sin, feel ourselves ennobled and dignified. The sufferings of the just are the saving element in history. But this is pre-eminently true of the Holy One who lays down His life for the unholy. We may criticise this or that doctrine, but we must bow before a fact of experience. And here is a fact—Christ's suffering is a redeeming power. It rescues us from the grasp of the finite and the transitory. It helps to a pure and holy life. It makes us sure of eternal blessedness, gives us a heart of flesh for a heart of stone, and endows us with the joyful certainty that God has forgiven us our sins and dwells within us, the secret of all good. Thus has God overruled the forces that put His Son to death, and has made them the instrument of blessing and redemption for humanity.

But it may be said: Suffering, for all that has been urged, is still a fact. It belongs to the order of the world, which ultimately rests

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on the Divine will. If God does not directly cause the misfortunes and calamities that befall man, they are here, nevertheless, by His permission. True; but from the standpoint of religion the distinction is vital. It is one thing to say that God permits them and even uses them, but a very different thing to say that God directly causes them. "A father sending his son into the school playground knows that many a cut and bruise will befall him—a broken bone, perhaps, or an infectious disease—the end in view is worthy of the risk. But it would involve a very different kind of father to give the child intentionally a cut or bruise or break one of his bones or infect him with disease, and very much the kind of father who would lead his son into vice."¹ Suffering is here, but God uses it for His own ends. It exists in a sense by His will, just as sin exists by His will; but sin and suffering alike are opposed to God's deepest will; and

¹ *The Christ that is to Be*, p. 109.

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Christ's boundless optimism prophesies of the day when they will pass like dreadful phantoms of the night and God will fill every heart with the cloudless sunshine of His love.

CHAPTER VI

THE NEW BELIEF IN PRAYER

AUGUSTE SABATIER has profoundly remarked that prayer is real religion; so that to write the history of prayer would be to write the history of religion. Like all great spiritual ideas, such as love and sacrifice and immortality, prayer started from the very humblest beginnings; and, like them, its true value is to be judged not by its earliest, but by its latest stages. The historical origin of prayer, how man first learned to pray, is one of the hardest problems in the study of human development. Modern students of ethnology point us to the magic spell as in all probability the first discernible germ of prayer. We open the graves of neolithic man and find amulets and mystic symbols and talismans, objects by means of which he sought to bend the will of super-

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natural powers to his desires. Here the modern savage may be taken as a representative of prehistoric man. The savage stands over against the unseen agencies that surround him, and commands them to do his bidding, by incantation and repetition of mystic names and phrases. He would, as it were, project his will to constrain the Divinity to obedience. But as the thought of God deepens, as His greatness and majesty possess the mind, the worshipper feels, by contrast, his own littleness, and he no longer seeks to work a spell; he falls prostrate, as a suppliant, and prays. For ages the spell ritual and the prayer ritual existed side by side, until gradually the more spiritual minds turned from magic as a violation of the true relation of man to God, and thus progressed from spell to prayer. Yet even in the darkness of barbarism gleams of higher light astonish the investigator, as, for example, the closing words of a prayer of the Khonds of Northern India: " Oh Lord,

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we know not what is good for us. Thou knowest what it is. For it we pray." Every fresh discovery that lays bare ancient civilisations is a witness to the universality of the prayer instinct. Egyptian papyri, Babylonian tablets, the sacred books of India, Persia, China, and Japan are crowded with prayers.

With one notable exception, the higher religions are built on prayer. The exception is Buddhism, which, believing that human life is under the inviolable order of Karma, has no room for prayer, and for it substitutes meditation. Buddha is reported to have said that "all prayers are vain repetitions." His eight-fold path, which leads to redemption, consists of right belief, right resolve, right word, right act, right life, right effort, right thinking, right meditation. There is no room here for prayer, first because Buddha knew no God to whom he could pray. The Brahmanical deities and ceremonies had become to him quite incredible. And secondly,

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because the essence of prayer is the feeling of dependence, and on what can the soul depend in a universe which is itself a stupendous illusion? A modern poet is true to the creed of Buddha when he makes him address his disciples thus :

“ Pray not. The darkness will not light. Ask
Nought from the silence, for it cannot speak!
Vex not your mournful mind with pious pains.
Ah! Brothers, Sisters, seek
Nought from the helpless gods by gift or hymn,
Nor bribe with blood, nor feed with fruit and
cakes.
Within yourselves deliverance must be sought,
Each man his present makes.
Ye suffer from yourselves, none else compels,
None other holds you that ye live and die,
And whirl upon the wheel of change and turn
Its spokes of agony.”¹

Yet the instincts of human nature could not be permanently suppressed. Buddhism was swept from India, and wherever it still reigns as a popular faith the images and relics of the great teacher are the objects of religious devotion. The later popular forms

¹ Sir Edwin Arnold: *The Light of Asia* (Bk. 8).

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of this faith return, however, to the practice of prayer. It is curious to note that Christian Science, in its pantheistic piety, sets aside prayer, in the traditional sense, in favour of a declaration of unity with the infinite substance of the universe. The intenser the theistic consciousness, the more prominent does prayer become. In Mohammedanism, for example, prayer occupies even a larger, or, at least, a more obvious place than in Christianity. When the muezzin calls the hour for prayer, the toiler in the field, the boatman on the river, the clerk in his office drops his task, spreads his carpet, bows reverently to the ground, and offers up his prayer. Indeed, one may say that nothing strikes the traveller in the East more than its unity in prayer amid discord in all else.

What does this universality of prayer mean? Is it that man is the victim of a deep-seated delusion? That through endless time he has been sending messages into empty

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space, to find as his sole answer the echo of his own voice? If so, then indeed his Maker has put him to permanent moral confusion. Rather would we say that prayer, in all its long and chequered history, is the response of man to the impact of the Divine personality upon him, mediated by a thousand influences, now of nature, and again, of social life; and yet again, through prophetic souls moved with immediate intuition of things spiritual. All the arguments of formal logic may seem to be against prayer, but the primal instincts of the soul cry out, and will not be silenced.

We are witnessing at the present time a resurgence of faith in prayer. It is not too much to say that this instinct, which for a generation and more has suffered a great eclipse, chiefly through the absorbing interest in the natural sciences and the critical temper which they produce, is now at length reasserting itself and is coming to its own. The causes of this rebirth of prayer are

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fairly obvious. There is, first of all, the new interest in religion, manifesting itself in a widespread feeling that religion is not merely concerned with a supernatural world or with preparation for the life after death, but has a vital bearing on our health and happiness here and now. As prayer is of the very essence of religion, it rises and falls with religion. A no less potent cause is the remarkable development in the science of psychology, which is strongly engaging the attention of the popular mind. Twenty years ago the study of the human soul and its processes was regarded as an interesting academic exercise devoid of any discernible practical good. To-day, chiefly through the writings of such men as F. W. H. Myers, Dr. William James, and a host of lesser men, the educated and even the semi-educated world has become convinced that mind is a much more mysterious thing than had been supposed, and has powers hitherto unsuspected to work good or ill in our daily life.

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Prayer implies a certain attitude of soul which has its psychic equivalents, and these equivalents, as we now know, react on the physical organism.

The latest philosophy, pragmatism by name, which witnesses to a revolt against transcendental and intellectualistic systems such as that of Hegel and his British followers, and a return to a more practical and ethical way of regarding things, favours the religious attitude toward life, and finds the imperishable foundations of religion in the inmost nature of the human soul. The pragmatist asks of an idea or a doctrine: "Does it work? What value has it for our concrete life?" Now, prayer is the highest mode of spiritual energising which we know, and achieves results in life. This very fact, from the modern point of view, vindicates its truth and legitimacy.

Here, then, it would seem, is the invincible argument for the validity of prayer. It is a cause. It creates changes. It produces

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phenomena. It takes its place beside other substantial realities of experience. There is not a mission in any of our great cities which cannot point to cases of men and women apparently lost to all good, sunken in vice and degradation, from whom, under the influence of prayer, evil habits have fallen off like soiled garments, and in whom it would seem as if something had died, giving birth to a new spirit, a new outlook on life and the world, a new order of conduct.¹ "Prayer," says Jowett, "is the summing up of the Christian life in a definite act which is at once inward and outward, the power of which on the character, like that of any other act, is proportioned to its intensity. The imagination of doing rightly adds little to our strength. Even the wish to do so is not necessarily accompanied by a change of heart. But in prayer we imagine, and wish, and perform, all in one. Our imperfect reso-

¹ For two striking illustrations see Begbie: *Twice Born Men*, pp. 142 seq.; pp. 165 seq.

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lutions are offered up to God; our weakness becomes strength; our words, deeds.”¹ Why can prayer achieve these great things, remove these mountains that stand between man and the true goal of existence? Religion answers, and rightly answers: The ultimate cause is God. There is in all prayer a mystic element which defies analysis and which cannot be described. Here faith and feeling come to their rights. Religion, and therefore prayer, without mysticism would be quite powerless to answer the deepest needs of the soul. But while on its Divine side prayer is not open to explanation, on its human side it can be regarded as a psychological fact, like any other activity of mind. Its nature, its achievements, the conditions of its fruitful exercise, the limitations within which it moves, may to some extent be understood; and the understanding of these things, so far from weak-

¹ *Interpretation of Scripture and Other Essays*, pp. 330, 331.

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ening, will stimulate him who prays to still greater devotion, by convincing him that in praying he is not dealing with the phantoms of imagination, but with real energies which work like other energies, in harmony with the order of the universe.

Perhaps the greatest difficulty which thoughtful minds have felt as to the reality of prayer has arisen in connection with the modern scientific conception of nature as the realm of inviolable law. The three men in the nineteenth century who have written most profoundly upon the subject of prayer—Schleiermacher, F. W. Robertson, and Martineau—were never able to overcome absolutely the scientific hindrance to an adequate treatment of their theme. They divided the world of reality into two great departments or realms: the realm of external, physical nature, in which inviolable necessity rules, and the realm of the soul, the home of freedom and spontaneity. As

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Martineau puts it: "The physical is governed from without; the spiritual can govern itself. The former is subject to the same fixed laws that prevail in other parts of the organised world. The latter is a centre of individual power which issues its own determinations. No act of will can protect the body amidst present pestilence, but holy resolution will fortify the soul against temptation." As a sign of the changed attitude of modern thought on this matter, we have only to cite the words of a well-known living philosopher:

"Even the most strictly mechanical view of the world-order must admit that prayer may under certain circumstances have an important effect in modifying the course of physical events. Indeed, within certain limits not easy to be fixed, the more strict and minute the tenure of the principle of mechanism, the more sure and widespread becomes the physical influence of the subjective attitude of prayer. Especially does this conception connect together, in terms of some comprehensive theory of relations, all the phenomena of human consciousness and certain correlated changes in the bodily mechanism. No most interior, unheard whisper, or

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even muttered thought of a prayer, could then fail of its record in some corresponding physical event.''¹

In these last sentences the writer calls attention to the fruitful commonplace of psychology, that mind and body constitute a unity, that for every thought and feeling, however slight, there is a corresponding nervous event. The emotion of faith which accompanies genuine prayer has a reflex action on the nervous organism.

There is, however, a truth in the older contention which Christians generally are beginning to acknowledge. Modern science has graven deep in our minds the thought that the world is ruled by general laws and that these laws are inviolable. It is true that we do not know why God so administers the world, but that He does so is an induction from a wide range of facts. We must also believe that if there is a universal mind expressed in these laws, we are justified in in-

¹ Ladd : *Philosophy of Religion*, Vol. II, pp. 377-378.

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ferring that, on the whole, it is best for us that the world should be so governed. The inexorableness of nature, which bears hard on the individual at times, is, after all, better than the chaos which would come if caprice or favouritism were lord of the universe. Therefore, the pious man will not pray for a violation or suspension of any of those fixed expressions of the Divine will which we call "the laws of nature." A true instinct warns us not to pray that the law of gravitation may cease to operate when we pass by, nor to pray that the moon should fail to attract the tides, nor to ask that the buried dead should rise from their graves. Prayers for changes in the weather held their ground much longer than other indiscriminating forms of petition, because people did not realise that the apparent irregularities of the weather are as much the result of fixed laws as the revolution of our earth around the sun or the rise and fall of the tides.

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On the other hand, we know that no man has ever prayed sincerely without effecting changes in his character that otherwise would never have taken place; and unless all the teaching of modern physiological psychology be false, no man can affect his character without affecting his nervous system, and through the nervous system his entire physical organism. It thus appears that Martineau's dualism has been vanquished at the point where its injurious effects would most be felt.

Psychology has done much to vindicate the reasonableness of prayer by co-ordinating it with other familiar phenomena of our mental life. For example, some of the workings of prayer are analogous to the results brought about by suggestion and self-suggestion. A man, let us suppose, prays, and invites others to pray with him, that he may have strength to overcome the craving for alcohol. These petitions act as powerful suggestions, which, if they are continued long

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enough, and assuming that there is no serious lesion of the brain, will accomplish the desired result. We know, too, that prayer under certain conditions has in cases of sickness a therapeutic efficacy. The lives of great religious personalities such as Augustine, Francis of Assisi, and Luther, and the growth of faith-healing and prayer-healing cults in our own time, offer such abundant proof that only ignorance and prejudice can any longer affect to doubt the reality of the alleged phenomena. Luther believed that his prayers saved from death four persons—himself, his wife Katherine, and his two intimate friends, Myconius and Melancthon. Myconius was at the last gasp when a letter in which Luther told him how he was praying for him, had such a powerful effect that he regained his strength and survived the reformer by about five years. Melancthon, who was stricken with a serious illness at Weimar in 1540, and was, indeed, given up to die, received such a powerful impulse

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from Luther's personal presence, strong faith, and earnest supplication that he, too, came back from the edge of the grave. Modern history is not without similar instances of the power of prayer. At all times, Christians, and many persons who would not claim the name, have shared the experience of Goethe, who, in his *Wilhelm Meister*, says, "whenever I have sought the aid of Heaven in moments of distress and sorrow, I have never failed to find relief." It is difficult to believe that such a faith, which still maintains itself in spite of the most powerful antagonistic influences, can be based upon a hallucination.

From a psychological point of view, many of these prayers may receive at least an approximate explanation as a reaction of the subconscious element in mind. As yet no satisfactory definition of the subconscious has been reached. But the facts go to show that states of thought may exist without our being aware of them, and give rise to intense

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emotions, and even build up complex structures of imagination, as in Flournoy's classic case of Mlle. Hélène Smith, who in a subconscious condition was able to describe the planet Mars, and even communicate the language of its inhabitants. The most recent medical authorities speak of diseases of the subconscious, such as multiple personality, neurasthenia, psychasthenia, hysteria, and psycho-epilepsy.

Now, the joy, the peace, the sense of overflowing satisfaction characteristic of some prayers, are also marks of the subconscious activity. To give up conscious effort, to relax the strain of attention, to fall back upon the subconscious factor, is to feel a sense of relief, of unity with one's self, which reacts favourably on mind and body. Dr. James has recently called attention to the power of prayer to release pent-up energies, to sweep away inhibitions, with resultant increase of freedom and ability in our lives. Coleridge has said that the mass of learned men can-

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not pray. Their lives are all the poorer on account of the critical inhibition. Learning of itself does not necessarily make a great personality; and it is significant that the men in our own time who have impressed all who came under their influence as tremendous forces, have been men of prayer. Such, for example, were Gladstone and Bismarck¹ and General Gordon. It would seem as if the natural energies of these men, great as they were, found re-enforcement through contact with powers greater and holier than they. If this be so, must it not follow that the resurrection of belief in prayer to-day will raise the effectiveness of the average person and make him of greater value to the

¹ Bismarck writes thus to his wife: "You may be assured that for a long time I have been helping you with my prayers that the Lord may deliver you from all unnecessary depression, and give you a heart full of cheerful reliance on God, and the same also to me. And I am confident that He will hear us and guide us both on the way that leads to Him; even though yours should sometimes turn the mountain on the left and mine on the right, they will after all meet again behind it."

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Church and to the world? It is here that the man of affairs, the "practical man," as he loves to call himself, registers sometimes a silent objection. To him, prayer seems a loss of time, when time is so precious. He reverses the old monastic saying, "*Orare est laborare*," "To pray is to work"—and says instead, "*Laborare est orare*," "To work is to pray." And the Church sometimes listens to his voice. Living societies of Christians at the present time are feeling the breath of a new spirit of philanthropy. The enthusiasm of humanity is being poured out afresh. The world's pain and sorrow move us intensely, and we are busy in forming clubs, in building parish houses, in helping the sick, in instructing the ignorant, in clothing the naked. The institutional Church has done great things, and is the outcome of one of the noblest tendencies of the time. And yet it is shadowed by a subtle danger. The practical man, in ignoring the ideal and the spiritual, or in

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relegating them to the background, is really injuring the quantity and quality of his work. Many of our Church activities are fussy and shallow simply because they lack the consecrating and deepening touch of prayer. Matthew Arnold never ceased warning the England of his day against the fatal power of machinery to engross the mind, so that the man becomes a slave to the product of his hands. In the long run, it is the spiritual quality of work that tells, and this is derived through contact with the Source of all power and sanctity. Just as, for bodily health, cessation from work is as necessary as work itself, that our body may be recharged with vital energy and that fresh currents of power may pass along the jaded nerves, so, if the soul is to achieve great things, is to create phenomena that are real and not merely a seeming, it must withdraw from external activities and renew its energies in contact with the Divine.

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It is here that the question may be raised: Does not this view rob prayer of its real worth? If its efficacy depends simply on the operation of psychic laws, where is there room for a personal God Who hears and answers the cries of His children? Now, it is quite true that, if it were generally believed that the whole transaction begins and ends in our own minds, the practice would soon die out. A drama, if it satisfies our æsthetic sense, may live on, though its heroes and events are no longer credited. But once a religion ceases to be believed in, it is doomed. It is, however, an unreal antithesis which sets God and law over against each other. It is analogous to the dilemma some would create between evolution and creation. The antithesis is dissolved if we reflect that there must be some ultimate source from which the mind draws its spiritual energy. Thus answers to prayer need not be interpreted as “miraculous” in the sense of violations of law, but

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as the results of the working of laws familiar to us in other phenomena.

To discover that prayer is subject to law is not to divest it of its power and validity, but rather to root it amid the ultimate realities and mysteries of experience. If there is an Infinite Spirit with whom our finite spirits are in communion, as all who pray believe, it follows that the result of the prayer, whatever it may be, is the action of this Spirit.

With the evolution of man's spiritual consciousness, prayer has gradually been purified of its grosser elements. It is true that some of these elements still remain as survivals of the earlier stage in the prayers of the immature. But, as a rule, our prayers become more and more spiritualised as life develops. "It would be," says Professor Herrmann of Marburg, the writer who in our time has discussed the subject most deeply, "a shameful misuse of prayer if trifles which have no real significance for our

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inner life were to be made the objects of our prayers. A prayer offered in such a trafficking fashion would be, as it were, empty talk.”¹ It is a commonplace of modern psychology that our real selves are by nature social. The purification of prayer has advanced through the impulse to the establishment of a grander and more satisfying self or personality, and this is achieved more and more by conceiving God in terms of social relationship as “Our Father in Heaven,” or as the Great Companion, or as a Loving Friend.

Communion with God as thus the embodiment of our highest ideals and aspirations has more and more thrust into the background impersonal ways of appeal and non-religious needs. The petitions of the child and of primitive man are for material goods. The prayers of the mature mind are for inward peace, spiritual uplift, for oneness with the Divine, for power to do the work of life.

¹ *Communion of the Christian with God.* Book 3, ch. 6.

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The desire for these inner spiritual goods marks the death of the old type of prayer, which sought to achieve its ends by magic and which sprang from the impotence of the natural man face to face with the forces of nature and stresses of life. And yet the deep feeling of the religious consciousness cannot let go the thought that God is interested in the fortunes of men, and that in some way, in answer to prayer, He can remove the barriers which hinder a sense of His nearness, and check the free play of that yearning for His spirit which is the beginning and end of the religious life.

CHAPTER VII

PRAYER: DIFFICULTIES AND METHODS

THERE are many who find themselves in agreement with the positions taken in the preceding chapter and admit the blessedness and reality of prayer, and yet must sadly confess that they are constrained and perplexed when they try to pray. If prayer is a natural, spontaneous instinct of the soul, it is also, as Luther said, an art. Just as there are born painters, musicians, poets, so there are born pray-ers.¹ It is, therefore, not to be wondered at that many pray with the feeling that their prayers bring little or no help and, indeed, are hardly worth while.

¹ As an example of a "born pray-er," I would mention the late Rev. Forbes Robinson, a lecturer at Christ's College, Cambridge. A friend writes of him: "He prayed, for those he loved, it is certain, for hours at a time. All his thoughts about some men gradually became prayers. And men must sometimes—with all reverence be it said—have experienced in his presence

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Their praying, like their religion, is a matter of tradition, with which they have never come personally to terms. And yet it may be doubted whether there are any who have received even an elementary religious training and yet cannot look back at this or that moment in the past when they really prayed. Who of us has not recalled, with wistful yearning, rare moments when under the pressure of some intolerable burden—some grief, perhaps, that threatened to wreck our life,—we wrestled with God in agony and would not let Him go until He blessed us; and now in duller and colder times we feel that if only we could regain the raptures of those great moments all would be well with us and prayer no longer a painful effort, but the very life of the soul. And yet on deeper reflection we realise that not catastrophe and upheaval

the same kind of a feeling of some great unseen influence at work as that which the disciples must have experienced in the presence of Christ after He, apart and alone, had watched through the night with God in prayer." See *Letters to his Friends*, by Forbes Robinson, p. 51.

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of the inner world, but normal and steady growth, is the law of spiritual development, and the very difficulties which meet us when we pray are themselves a challenge to our souls, and form, it may be, a needed discipline without which prayer could not have its perfect work. These difficulties gather around the act of prayer, the Power to whom it is addressed, and the possibility of obtaining an answer.

To begin with the difficulty involved in the very act of praying: one feels instinctively that there is a right and a wrong way, and that on our choice depends the success or failure of the effort. Here, as in every other exercise of our minds, we are subject to the psychological law of attention. We must attend to the matter in hand and refrain from attending to things that have no concern with our present interest. In the words of Christ, the great Master of the art of prayer, "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door,

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pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.”¹ Here the law of attention is formulated in terms at once simple and graphic. We are to shut the doors of the soul, and thus keep out the multitudinous impressions which tend to overwhelm and distract the mind. We must get alone with ourselves, with the interests about which we would pray, and with the God to whom we would pray; but how difficult this is only he can tell who has tried to do it. For a minute or two, perhaps, we succeed in thinking about the subject-matter of our prayer; then our minds fly off at a tangent, a thousand alien thoughts attract us, and we end by mechanically saying a prayer, which is a very different thing from praying. Perhaps in despair we gradually give up the habit as beyond us. What, then, is the remedy, if remedy there be? I answer,—just as lack of will power is cured by

¹ Matthew vi, 6.

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willing, or poverty of thought by thinking, so the power of attention is won by attending. We may apply Kant's great aphorism to our subject and say: we ought to pray, therefore we can. The truth is that behind the lack of attention there lurks often a deeper fault—lack of interest. We are not sufficiently interested in the affairs of the inner world, in our spiritual development, in our relation to God, and in our moral destiny. Were we overpoweringly interested in these things, prayer would become a natural, spontaneous outflow of the mind. In approaching, then, the act of prayer, we would do well, by quiet self-reflection, by brooding over the thought of Psalmist or prophet or teacher, to win a living conviction of the reality and paramount importance of the things of the soul. Once this conviction has been wrought in us it will be harder for us not to pray than to pray; and as for the mental or moral effort involved in concentration of the mind on spiritual things, this becomes easier by repe-

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tition, like any other habit, and, like any other habit, it is achieved, as a rule, gradually and after many a fall. For if prayer in essence be the voluntary turning of the soul to God, it needs no long or elaborate use of words. It may be, as the hymn says, only "the burden of a sigh, the falling of a tear." We can begin to acquire the art of prayer by learning, as it were, its alphabet. Scattered throughout the pages of Bible and Prayer-book and the great classics of Christian devotion will be found many a brief but pregnant phrase or sentence on which our spirits can wing their way to the heart of the Father in heaven.

"Create in me a clean heart, O God;
And renew a right spirit within me."

"Search me, O God, and know my heart ;
Try me and know my thoughts;
And see if there be any wicked way in me,
And lead me in the way everlasting."

"O God, be merciful to me, a sinner."

"Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief."

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“ Father, I have sinned against heaven and before
Thee

And am no more worthy to be called Thy son.”

“ O send out Thy light and Thy truth
That they may lead me.”

These brief sentences are typical of many at our disposal. Beginning with such as these, we can gradually extend the scope of our prayer until the habit becomes as essential to our spiritual life as food and exercise are to the life of the body.

But not only is the art of prayer difficult of attainment conceived as an exercise of mind. Much of the failure in prayer that we deplore is owing to absence of that moral condition out of which alone true prayer can spring. This condition is absolute sincerity, perfect truthfulness. For the things about which we would pray to God are the most sacred intimacies of life—the sins we have committed and the uncommitted sins we have imagined; the self-created difficulties in the management of our own characters; our refusal to live up to the level of visions that

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have come to us in moments of insight and inspiration; the cowardice which has shrunk from opportunities of service to our fellow-men, or things more poignant still—the harsh words we have spoken and the unloving acts we have done to loved ones now beyond the reach of our penitence; the lack of a large and generous and forgiving spirit to those who are still with us; the inarticulate hungerings and thirstings for redemption from ourselves, from the bondage of evil, for reconciliation with God and the world. But to think truly and honestly about these things, to throw off the subtle disguises with which self-seeking would deceive us, demands an integrity and singleness of mind that are certainly not the work of a few brief, hurried moments. It is here that the sad contradiction which we see in some lives finds its explanation. The defender of prayer is pointed to persons brought up under the influence of religion and finding an apparent pleasure in the exercises of religion, and who yet re-

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main hard, selfish, un-Christlike. What value can prayer have, it is triumphantly asked, when it has failed to renew these with whom it has been a custom for years? The answer is obvious. Prayer itself, in the case of these persons, has become degraded to the low level on which their lives are led. It is implicated in their general insincerity of character. Having never got face to face with their real selves, their praying has not been real. It has been that most hateful of all things, shallow make-believe.

The next difficulty which most of us feel when we pray besets us when we think of Him to whom we would pray. The spiritual world seems so remote, intangible, unreal, as compared with our external environment, this solid and substantial frame of things. We go forth to meet Nature, and she responds to us through eye and ear and touch. We speak with our fellow-men, and at once communion of minds is established and all the joys of human intercourse are ours: but

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when we try to speak to God and hear Him speak to us, it is as though we were in a vacuum, a soundless silence that paralyses utterance. What we miss is the concrete and personal. When we try to think of the Infinite Spirit our thoughts lose themselves, and we wander in the immense vague and feel the bewilderment of him who cried:

“ O that I knew where I might find Him!
Behold I go forward but He is not there;
And backward but I cannot perceive Him;
On the left hand, where He doth work;
But I cannot behold Him;
He hideth Himself on the right hand
That I cannot see Him.”¹

We try to think of Him as infinitely wise and powerful. But goodness, wisdom, power, are themselves impersonal things, and in them the heart can find no rest. Now, it goes without saying that without a sense of the reality of God, prayer is utterly worthless. But this sense of God's reality springs itself out of some revelation of God to us.

¹ Job xxiii, 3, 8, 9.

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A heart unvisited by any revelation of the Divine would be a heart without prayer. "No man can pray," says Hermann, "if by his own fault the memory that God once spoke to him lies buried and forgotten. Hamlet's stepfather offers a peculiarly striking illustration of this thought.¹ He feels his terrible position. He remembers that when in need men should cry out to God; but neither the summons to pray nor his need can show him how to pray. It is true that he has thoughts about God, but they bring him no help, because he can remember no experience of a direct revelation of God."² Few there are who have not known one, at least, whom death has orb'd into a perfect star, and who, when with us,

¹ "Pray can I not,
Though inclination be as sharp as will;
My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent,
And, like a man to double business bound,
I stand in pause where I shall first begin,
And both neglect."

—*Hamlet*, Act III, Scene 4.

² Art. *Gebet* in Herzog's *Encyclopædia*.

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amid all the weaknesses and frailties of the flesh, radiated forth a very glory of God. Here, then, we can find a help for our weakness. God will become more real and more personal to us if when we pray we recall the figure of one whom we have known and loved, and brood on the beauty and grace of word and deed which the memory will never let die, and then say within ourselves: "This is God, only grander, more gracious, more beautiful by far." And from the imperfect embodiments of Divine grace we can turn sometimes to the pages of the New Testament and look at the picture of the Son of Man as there portrayed. We cannot look at Him without feeling that in Him God comes to us, in Him God's love assumes visible embodiment, God's holiness ceases to be an ideal abstraction, takes to itself hands and feet and moves before us in a familiar and irresistible beauty. Putting ourselves face to face with Jesus Christ, the Infinite and the Absolute confront us, as it were, within the

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limits of space and time. The whole history of Jesus is but a parable of God's attitude toward us. Our prayers, therefore, will not lack definiteness or spiritual satisfaction if while we pray we imagine the figure of Christ in some characteristic moment of His career. As He places His hand on the sick and lifts disease from body and soul, we see, as in a mirror, the true character of God, as the Source from which all healing, health, and happiness come. When we see Him ascending Mount Olivet to weep the tears of pity over His beloved Jerusalem, what is this but a sign of something still more wonderful—the vision of God, who from His heavenly Olivet is vexed by the sins and touched by the sorrows of His children. When we follow Him to His last great sacrifice, wherein He lays down His life for the sinful, we see through the temporal drama into the eternal passion of God who, in some mysterious way, is afflicted in all our affliction, and bears vicariously the burden of human guilt and

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loves every creature He has made with a love that works through death and disease and agony to final redemption. If, then, we let such thoughts as these fill the mind as we pray, the fire of devotion will not long remain unkindled, because God will no longer be silent unto us, but will become at once supremely real and supremely lovable.

Another, and to some minds the most serious difficulty, concerns success in prayer. "Why should I continue to pray," an objector will say, "since, of the hundreds of prayers I have offered, none, so far as I can see, have been answered? Why persist in a practice apparently so futile?" I would reply: "What do you mean by an *answer* to prayer? Do you mean something in quantity and quality identical with the thing asked? If so, you would reduce your intercourse with God to the terms of mechanics or mathematics. But prayer is communion of a free and living soul with a free and living God. An outside observer judges the prayers

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of a good man to be unanswered if the exact things prayed for are not bestowed; and yet the man who prays feels that he has been answered, though in a way which he had perhaps not anticipated. The man who has not learned how to put the sense of God's presence in the soul above all other goods, does not know the God whom Jesus Christ revealed. For is not this the highest good—to have God as our most intimate possession, to feel His life pulsing in our hearts, to realise His love as a power stronger than all the ills and wrongs of existence? A New Testament writer tells us that Christ himself was heard crying to God in His agony; and yet we know that God answered His prayer, not by letting the cup pass from Him, but by strengthening Him to drink it to its bitter dregs. So, too, it may chance that in our lives the burdens of sorrow are not removed, even by our intensest prayer, yet do we find an answer in an increase of strength to bear

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them. There are those who feel that were it not for prayer they would sink into despair and madness. Well, says Rothe, "He whom men have rendered unhappy, must see to it that he maintains friendship with God, so that at all times he may cast himself with sorrow upon His bosom and there let his tears have vent."¹ On the other hand, it is also true that a man may find himself in a situation which acts as a barrier between him and God. He wishes the situation modified in order that once more he may enjoy the light of God's face. To pray and hope for such a modification is quite within the limits of true prayer. Moreover, we must remember that very often our prayers fail because they do not fulfil the conditions of true prayer. What these conditions are we can best learn when we turn to the teachings of Jesus.

Jesus, it need scarcely be said, did not create prayer. He was the son of a people

¹ *Still Hours*, p. 250.

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among whom it was a recognised custom; and He came from a home where daily prayer sanctified daily toil. Here, as elsewhere, His function was to purify and deepen and spiritualise existing ideas. Hence, He taught His disciples how to pray—the technique, if we may say so, the method of the art. Much of what He said has been lost to us forever, but there are words of purest gold still preserved. We can occasionally overhear Him as He prays. We have His model prayer, which excels all the creeds of Christendom as the one bond of Christian fellowship; and here and there, scattered through the Gospels, we catch invaluable hints as to its essence, its method, its values, and its reward.

He himself lived in an atmosphere where prayer, at any moment, was the natural expression of His soul. The “desert place,” the lonely “mountain,” was the favourite scene of His communion with the Father, a communion not of a few moments snatched from the exactions of a busy life, as is too

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often the case with us, but lasting continuously for several hours at a time. It is here that we touch the Holy of Holies of the Master's life, and here are unveiled to us the secret sources of His power. The most realistic of the Evangelists show Him exhausted, depleted of strength and poise by the strain of teaching and healing in the enervating air of the Valley of the Jordan, and unbalanced amid the cries and turmoil of the thronging multitude. After a few hours' sleep, He rises up before dawn, and seeks a natural solitude that He may recover strength and self-possession through conscious intercourse with God. It is typical of His entire history. What He gains in prayer He gives to men; and when His forces are spent He turns back again from man to God for fresh supplies. Thus does His life move on in perfect harmony. The spiritual energy which He squanders freely at the call of need is ever renewed in the exercise of prayer. His lessons on prayer are born

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of His own experience and therefore are as vital as when they were first uttered. He warns His disciples against false forms of prayer—the prayer of the hypocrite, who makes an ostentatious parade of his piety; the prayer of the heathen, whose mechanical repetition of certain formulas degrades the whole process to the level of magic. The fatal flaw of both Pharisaic and pagan types of praying is that in neither is there real speech with God. In the one, the eye of him who prays is on his fellow-men. In the other, it is directed to some earthly desire. In neither is it fixed on God. The very essence of prayer lies in direct personal intercourse with God. In two short stories, not without a touch of grave humour, Jesus emphasises persistence in prayer in spite of apparent failure. The story of the man who, at midnight, under the pressure of a sudden emergency, knocks at his neighbour's door for help and does not cease knocking, in spite of the grumblings of the friend within, until

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his petition is granted,¹ and the story of the unjust judge who, regardless of the claims of justice, human or divine, was so regardless of his own comfort that rather than be worn out by the widow's ceaseless importunity he granted her legal redress,² are so constructed as to show that if persistence can win success with men who are not even moderately good, it will much more avail with Him who, as the Father, waits to give "good things to them that ask Him." Hence He utters, as His manner was, without any qualification whatever, His great exhortation to prayer: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."³ Finally, the prayer that brings a blessing is the prayer of faith. Without the going forth of the soul in trustful confidence, prayer remains as a barren mental exercise. Once let it be imbued with a spirit of filial hope and trust, and it

¹ Luke xi, 5-8.

² Luke xviii, 1-5.

³ Matthew vii, 7.

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can uproot mountains and achieve the impossible.

A consideration of the Lord's model prayer offers valuable suggestions on our subject. This prayer is at once the alphabet and finished expression of the praying art. It sums up in a few brief sentences the inarticulate aspirations of the immature mind, and at the same time is so comprehensive that he who can pray it, not as if it were a mechanical formula, but from the heart, has reached a stage of spiritual growth than which there is none higher on earth. In the form in which it probably fell from the Master's lips, its brevity, conciseness, and simplicity are still more obvious than in the form which came into vogue later.

“ Father! Hallowed be Thy Name! Thy Kingdom come! Give us this day our appertaining bread! and forgive us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors! And lead us not into temptation!” Two petitions for God's glory and the good of the world, and

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three for personal goods—daily bread, forgiveness, and salvation—the whole addressed to God as Father, who knows what we have need of before we ask Him—such is this wonderful prayer. From it we learn the type of prayer that wins acceptance with God. It is the prayer which lifts us above the low earthly region to which our minds naturally gravitate, and carries us into the spiritual world, which puts first the thought of God and of His Kingdom, which seeks, not to change God's will, but to be in harmony with it, which perseveres in spite of toil and discouragement, and which finally is purged of all selfishness because it seeks no good apart from the good of others.

To some minds the value and efficacy of *intercessory* prayer raises a great difficulty. Such persons may say: "I can understand praying for myself, because I can see that prayer may work as a subconscious reaction in my own mind. But how can my prayer help others?" Now,

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here we might plead the example of the Master of prayer, who prayed for Peter that his faith should not fail, and who with His dying breath interceded for His murderers. We might plead, too, that in praying for others we obey the deepest and tenderest instincts of the soul. How can we love one whom we never remember before God? We might also argue that the prayer of intercession urges us to unselfish service in the behalf of him for whom we pray and thus tends to bring about its own fulfilment. "There is nothing," says William Law, the great mystic, "that makes us love a man so much as praying for him; and when you can do this sincerely for any man, you have fitted your soul for the performance of everything that is kind and civil towards him . . . be daily on your knees in a solemn, deliberate performance of this devotion, praying for others in such form, with such length, importunity, and earnestness as you use for yourself; and you will find all little, ill-

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natured passions die away, your heart grow great and generous, delighting in the common happiness of others as you used only to delight in your own.”¹

These considerations have been re-enforced by modern knowledge, which recognises the intimate relations between mind and mind, and points to the possibility that strong desires and feelings may by their own power reach and help other souls. The theory of telepathy is winning more credence the more it is investigated. Moreover, the close connection between matter and mind shows how prayer for the sick, especially if the sick are conscious that they are being prayed for, can have a real effect. Strong direction of our wills toward what we believe to be good should not end in our own good, but should embrace the good of others.

So far I have spoken of prayer as an act of normal and self-possessed persons; but the question is often asked, “Are the meth-

¹ *The Serious Call.*

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ods of prayer suitable for the well equally suitable for the sick? ” Take the case of a man suffering from the miseries of neurasthenia or psychasthenia: how can he pray, seeing that the very faculties involved in the act of praying are profoundly disturbed, and the effort of mental concentration is an impossible task? In such cases, where the central citadel of personality is invaded, it is obvious that a different method of prayer may be pursued. Constantly do I hear people suffering from one or other of the numerous nervous maladies of our time complain that they cannot pray, and that their imperfect attempts have brought no spiritual comfort. The reason is that in trying to pray as they were accustomed to do in the days when they enjoyed good health they put an insupportable strain upon their psychic energies, with consequent increased disturbance and mental turmoil. Relaxation—not Concentration—should be the motto of the nervously afflicted. The body should be

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put in the most restful and relaxed attitude; the mind should not be intensely concerned with any definite or concrete desire, but should be filled with a sense of the Divine Presence, with a feeling of perfect resignation to the Divine will. In other words, the form of prayer which is to be commended to the suffering is what has been long known in the Church as "Practice of the Presence of God." In the quietude of mind and calm of bodily feelings, which are possible in a state of relaxation, the soul is opened to revelations, sometimes richer and more significant than any vouchsafed in times of perfect health. It is told of that saintly woman of the fourteenth century, Julian of Norwich, that in a time of severe sickness she received a revelation in the strength of which she was able to live for many years afterwards, though the revelation itself was not fully made clear till a much later time. The explanation she gives in the language of the mystics: " ' Wouldst thou learn thy Lord's

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meaning in this thing? Learn it well: Love was His meaning. Who showed it thee? Love. What showed He thee? Love. Wherefore showed it He? For Love. Hold thee therein and thou shalt learn and know more in the same. But thou shalt never know nor learn therein other thing without end.' Thus was I learned that Love was our Lord's meaning."¹ This story is not without parallel in our own time. Cases have come to my knowledge of persons who have experienced in this form of prayer a sense of spiritual exaltation, a feeling of inward rest and satisfaction which played no small part in their eventual restoration to normal self-control. Of course, these experiences will be explained away by those who do not believe in the reality of a spiritual world, as self-created delusions. But a delusion does not create a high type of spiritual character, does not lead to profound views of God and of human life. We must believe that these things are

¹ Iorge: *Studies of English Mystics*, p. 77.

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the product of contact with the Spirit of truth and goodness. The whole question of prayer, in essence, resolves itself to this: Is there a God able to speak to the creatures He has made? If there is, but if He is unwilling so to speak, He can be no God worthy of reverence or even of a moment's thought. If, however, He is both able and willing to speak, we ought surely to believe the men and women who say they have heard His voice. However great the difficulties which logic and common sense create, life itself will teach us that as the years pass and the shadows of dissolution, sorrow, and death gather around us, hard as it may be to pray, it will be still harder not to pray.

CHAPTER VIII

IMMORTALITY AND SCIENCE

ONE of the most serious consequences of the present unsettlement in religious thought is the sad eclipse that has befallen the great consolation of humanity, the hope

“ That those we call the dead
Are breathers of an ampler day
For ever nobler ends.”

Turn in whatever direction we may, forces of modern thought and civilisation are engaged, it would seem, in sapping the foundations of belief in man's immortal destiny. The very complexity of the life of to-day, the multiplicity of its interests, intellectual and social, so fascinate the individual mind, so submerge it in finite things, that it cannot get face to face with that question of questions: “ What am I? ” and so sees no

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reason to ask: "Whither do I go?" The world of knowledge and of art orbs itself into a self-contained whole, the wealth of which is so great that a lifetime seems all too little to compass it and the mind has no reserves left for anything beyond. And if through some painful experience, some sudden stroke piercing to the soul's inmost depths, one awakes to the need of an answer to these problems, with what a depressing consensus of doubt or dogmatic denial is he confronted! Science, which undertakes to play the rôle, formerly assumed by theology, of guide and ruler of civilisation, accepts as ultimate bounds behind which we cannot go, such things as matter and motion, or mass and energy; proposes to show how, by these means, the world has come to be, and frowns on any attempt to raise the question of ultimate origin and destiny. When this agnostic attitude is abandoned, as it is by such a scientific authority as Professor Haeckel, it issues in the most thorough-

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going assertion of the impossibility of a life after death.

Professor Haeckel, whose ambition it is to raise empirical science into a philosophy devoid of all metaphysics, settles the questions of origin and destiny by the help of a few concepts borrowed from the very metaphysics which he rejects.¹ He brands the three fundamental truths of religion,—God, Freedom, and Immortality,—as the “three buttresses of superstition,” which it is his business as a scientific man utterly to demolish. He assures us that all the proofs usually put forward in defence of belief in a future existence have been shown to be inconsistent with the facts established by physiological psychology and the doctrine of descent. The theological idea that God made man in his own image and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, is “a pure myth.” The moral proof, Kant’s famous argument

¹ Compare E. Boutroux: *Science and Religion in Contemporary Philosophy*, p. 149.

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that the highest good is possible only under the pre-supposition of the immortality of the soul, that the future life as inseparably bound up with the moral law is a postulate of the pure practical reason—this is “nothing more than a pious wish.” The teleological proof, that man is equipped with powers and capacities for which earth and time afford no adequate scope, rests, we are informed, “on a false anthropism.”¹ All these and similar ideas have been completely overturned by the advance of scientific criticism.

As the arguments of religion and philosophy have been undermined and no longer convince educated men, modern knowledge has brought forward proofs, physiological, histological, experimental, and pathological, which, it is alleged, demonstrate this treasured faith to be a mere superstition. Anthropology shows how the dream of a future life has visited, in very different forms, the minds of all peoples. The Indian dreamed of his

¹ *The Riddle of the Universe*, pp. 203, 204.

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hunting fields; the Mohammedan of dark-eyed houris and flower-decked gardens; the Norseman of banquets, with haunches of venison and goblets of wine. Thus did imagination project into the future the desires of sense. What greater warrant has the Christian hope than these earthly wishes of the non-Christian mind? Biology since Darwin has been accumulating the proofs of our kinship with the brute creation, and man appears to be a kind of zoölogical monstrosity, compact of myriad disharmonies—a paradoxical absurdity. Physiological psychology teaches as a commonplace that our mental life is a function of the gray matter of the brain; and the inference is easy that the function vanishes with the dissipation of its organ. To suppose that thought can survive the brain would be tantamount to supposing that the steam in a tea-kettle could survive the destruction of the tea-kettle. Physical chemistry discloses the universe as a congeries of elements in motion; but the in-

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destructibility of matter and energy is now in grave question, as it is indeed a mere inference from experience.¹ In a universe where nothing persists, how can man claim immortality, consisting, as he does, of a few pounds of carbon and lime, a few ounces of phosphorus, sodium, potassium, etc., and so many cubic feet of hydrogen, oxygen, and nitrogen? To sum up Professor Haeckel's thesis: "The belief in the immortality of the human soul is a dogma which is in hopeless contradiction with the most solid empirical truths of modern science."²

And when we turn to philosophy, which at one time was supposed in spite of its inability to bake bread, to be able to give us God, Freedom, and Immortality, we find it put to the greatest straits in establishing the reality of the individual against the all-engulfing monism of absolute idealism on the one hand, and the equally voracious monism

¹ C. Ostwald: *Individuality and Immortality*.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 210.

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of the non-theistic doctrine of evolution on the other. Mr. F. H. Bradley, one of the acutest metaphysical minds of this generation, is of opinion that "a future life must be taken as decidedly improbable;" and his ultimate reason for so thinking is simply that man is an unreal aspect of the absolute, without any independent worth of his own.¹

Professor Paulsen holds that ethics must stand henceforth on a basis quite independent of belief in a future life, since this belief itself is in a very parlous state at present, nor is there much hope of strengthening it.²

The fact of this modern way of thinking is too obvious to be questioned. There are many who are conscious at times of grave uncertainty, and there are some who think that even should the belief that death ends all become predominant, religion might still live on and gain fresh conquests. There are some whose affections drive them

¹ *Appearance and Reality*, p. 505.

² *System der Ethik*, p. 406.

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to accept a faith which their reason rejects. Zola, all his life an agnostic, could not bear the thought of bidding an eternal farewell to the mother whom he loved, and in order to make life tolerable, took refuge in a belief which he had consistently rejected. However natural this feeling may be, it is not strong enough to bear the weight of immortality. The desire is father to the thought, and we are too partial to those whom we love to take a dispassionate view of their possible future. Some there are who resign themselves to the inevitable with bitter scorn and savage contempt for the universe and all its ways. Their spirit is that of the French writer, who sees in man only "the hero of a lamentable drama played in an obscure corner of the universe in virtue of blind laws before an indifferent nature and with annihilation as its *dénouement*."¹ It is here that we may see the problem of a future life taking on a social

¹ L. Ackermann: *Ma Vie*, p. 111.

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and very human significance. Sociological and medical experts are agreed that suicide is alarmingly on the increase.¹ Behind the facts recorded in the statistical tables there lies another of still deeper meaning—the weakening of hope through loss of faith in a future life. It is obvious that only the man who is convinced himself that death ends all can risk the chance in which so many of his fellow-men believe, that it does not end all, and rather than bear the troubles that he has, prefers those that he knows not of. When some overwhelming calamity, some bitter sorrow or intolerable shame overtakes the modern man, he is prone to agree with the poet when he sings:

“ Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain.”

There are others who wish to believe, yet feel the various metaphysical and

¹ In 1900 the number of suicides amounted to 6,735; in 1908 the number was nearly 11,000.

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religious arguments to be little better than broken reeds, and can but trust the larger hope. For them the traditional forms in which the idea has clothed itself in the past are no longer possible, and in the absence of a more adequate embodiment the essence of the belief has difficulty in maintaining itself. Few, if any, can rise to the lofty heroism of Auguste Comte, who rejoiced in the sacrifice of the individual to the race, and asserted that death would seem to him a poor affair if it did not involve his own extinction. Speaking generally, men shrink from annihilation, and in spite of the substitutes for personal continuance after death offered by Positivism and Absolute Idealism, the sting of death, the fear that in dying man perishes like the brute, remains unextracted.

Professor Osler thinks that the modern man is utterly indifferent to the whole matter. This finite world is enough for him, and he recks not of any other. "Where," asks the Professor, "among the educated and the

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refined, much less among the masses, do we find any urgent desire for a future life? It is not a subject of drawing-room conversation, and the man whose habit it is to button-hole his acquaintances and inquire earnestly after their souls is shunned like the Ancient Mariner. Among the clergy it is not thought polite to refer to so delicate a topic, except officially from the pulpit. Most ominous of all, as indicating the utter absence of interest on the part of the public, is the silence of the press, in the columns of which are manifest daily the works of the flesh.”¹

Did men really entertain such a wonderful thought as survival after death, would they not make of it a subject of daily conference, and vie with one another in expressions of astonishment and joy at such a glorious prospect? So, indeed, it would seem. And yet the idea is based on a very superficial conception of human nature. Men are dimly conscious that they live in a world full of

¹ *Science and Immortality*, pp. 11, 12. (?)

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mysteries, of the strangest contradictions and the most perplexing riddles, such as life and birth and love and death; yet in the small-talk of the drawing-room and the newspaper these great realities occupy an insignificant place as compared with bridge and automobile racing and the latest scandal in the smart set.

The trivialities of the moment may well form the light froth that dances on the surface of human intercourse. But to suppose that this is all, that there are no depths beneath where the things that lie nearest our souls secrete themselves is to commit the common fallacy of taking a part for the whole. And certainly in our own time there are signs that a revival of religion is at hand. Among these signs not the least notable is a returning interest in the question of human destiny, if one is to judge from the books and discussions in the reviews and magazines dealing with this question. It looks as if men were at last feeling that the gospel

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of a purely earthly progress as formulated by science does not suffice to stay the infinite yearning of the heart.

We are told, indeed, that it is the part of wise men not to ask whether this or that doctrine agrees with one's dearest wishes, but to accept facts, and with stoic resignation bow to their sternest implications. And the advice is sound, only the interests involved are so momentous—such interests as the significance of life, whether there is any possibility of realising the Good, here or hereafter, the dignity and worth of human effort and aspiration—that it is our bounden duty to scan the alleged facts with the most critical care before we resign ourselves to a doctrine of despair. Nay, should it turn out that the arguments for and against balance each other, we would be justified in tipping the scale on the affirmative side by throwing into it our own subjective need, our imperative demand for a belief that will harmonise our experience.

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What are the facts which, from the standpoint of the physician, seem to compel us to a negative conclusion? To begin with the more obvious, Dr. Osler tells us that the majority of the dying express no fears or hopes about the other world, that, as a rule, man dies as he has lived, practically uninfluenced by the thought of a future life. “I have,” he says, “had careful records of about five hundred death-beds studied particularly with reference to the modes of death and the sensations of the dying. The great majority gave no sign, one way or the other; like their birth, their death was ‘a sleep and a forgetting.’ ”¹

Surely, this distinguished writer is wrong in supposing that a true criterion for judging whether faith in a future life has any place in the thoughts of men is to be found in the feelings of the soul as it approaches its earthly limit. Not to man weakened by disease, his moral and spiritual energies dulled

¹ *Science and Immortality*, p. 19.

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through the collapse of the body, but to man in the fulness of his powers, amid the activities of his daily calling, with the thoughts that surge through his brain, the hopes that inspire his heart, the ideals that inform his conscience, should appeal be made. Victor Hugo, standing beside the open grave of Balzac, uttered these memorable words: "No, it is not the Unknown to him. No, I have said it before and I shall never weary of saying it, it is not darkness to him; it is Light! It is not the end, but the beginning; not nothingness, but eternity. Such coffins proclaim immortality. Do we not say to ourselves here to-day that it is impossible that a great genius in this life can be other than a great spirit after death?" Now, it was the vision, not of the dying but of the living Balzac that forced from Hugo this confession of faith.

Moreover, a phenomenon well known to those who minister to the dying is their curious reserve about their deepest feelings, as

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though the soul, preparatory to her strange lone journey, withdrew into herself, absorbed in her own affairs; and this self-observation may well be mistaken for blank indifference.

Much more important and perplexing are the facts of physiological psychology. These facts may be summed up in the familiar formula: "No psychosis without neurosis." Modern investigation has shown the inexplicably close relation that subsists between mind and brain. Brain and the manifestations of mind grow and decline together. Stop the flow of arterial blood to the brain and profound disturbance of consciousness ensues. Arrest the development of the brain, and an idiot is the result. Administer cocaine or alcohol, and you change the moral and intellectual character. These commonplace have received a new and sinister significance from the observations made in our hospitals and psychological laboratories. For it is now established that not only is there a general correlation between the ac-

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tivities of the cerebral cortex as a whole and the mental principle, but also that various mental functions are localised in given cerebral areas. It has been found by positive experiment that the division of functions in different portions of the cortex is connected with the organs of sensation and movement. But experimental psychologists maintain that fuller knowledge will show the various regions with which complex mental phenomena are correlated; nay, that we may even hope some day to be able to acquire the exact physical equivalents to mental functioning. One of the greatest of living psychiatrists asserts that there is, so to say, a "character centre," a "chief organ of character," in the brain. This organ he locates in a certain part of the cortex which he calls "the sphere of bodily feeling," because on that part almost every operation of the body has an influence. It is this centre which is especially susceptible to narcotics, such as alcohol and morphine, which, as we know,

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have an especially disintegrating and degrading effect on moral character. On the state of this centre depend those impulses which make a man a cruel murderer or a tender-hearted philanthropist.¹

Thought, then, is a function of the brain and involves, doubtless, in every one of its conscious operations, the consumption of the brain substance. It is almost impossible to exaggerate the interdependence of mind and body. Must it not follow, as the night the day, that the dissolution of the brain carries with it the dissolution of the mental function? Such is the inference implicitly drawn by many investigators, and it has found explicit expression in the writings of such men as Duhring and Haeckel. There is no doubt that the facts on which this argument rests appeal very strongly to the unreflective imagination, as there is also no doubt that the theory here asserted or implied—that nerv-

¹ Prof. P. Flechsig: *Die Grenzen geistiger Gesundheit und Krankheit*, pp. 35, 36.

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ous changes are the causes of mental changes, —is for experimental purposes an excellent working hypothesis. But if we wish to obtain an insight into the deeper as apart from the externally observed relations of brain and mind, physiological psychology is quite helpless. All that this science can give us is two parallel series of occurrences—a series of molecular changes in the brain and a series of psychical states: but the relation between these two series defies the utmost scrutiny. Between the material and the psychical events there is an unbridged chasm. To say that thought is a “function” of brain, except for certain specific purposes, is to say something that is not strictly true. If the word “function” be used in the physiological sense, then thought or consciousness does not come into view at all; the function or specific work of the brain in this sense is to control the body. If it be insisted that mind is simply a name for the sum total of cerebral activities, I must

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ask what the objector means by such a statement. A cerebral activity is a form of motion and we know motion simply as a mental state. In other words, mind is first. Motion is an inference from mind. To say, then, that mind is a function of, or is produced by motion, is to reverse the order of nature and make the effect precede the cause. The truth is, for the physical psychologist, feeling and consciousness on the one hand, neural changes on the other, are ultimate facts behind which he cannot go. As to why the mind has a body he has not the smallest inkling. The problem of the fundamental and not merely externally observed relation must be handed over to the metaphysician for solution, and his solution will be affected by his philosophical or general world-view. The danger which besets the physiological psychologist is that of turning an observed co-existence into a metaphysical necessity. When we argue that because on this planet within our

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experience thought is never known to exist apart from a brain, therefore throughout the entire cosmos thought can exist only in connection with gray matter, it is evident that we are occupying quite untenable ground. It is against this very argument that John Stuart Mill in a well-known passage raises a warning voice.¹

Now, so long as the correlation of mind and brain cannot be shown to be metaphysical, that is, grounded in the very nature of things, it is open to us to believe, if there are reasons for the belief, that the fall of the brain does not necessarily mean the fall of the soul. It is true, as has been already said, that on many of the facts of psycho-physics the imagination fastens with great avidity. But, after all, it is reason, not imagination, that is the final judge; and in the interest of reality it may be necessary to resist the impression which external phenomena make upon the mind.

¹ *Essays on Religion: Immortality.*

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But we can go further than this. If from one point of view science has made it harder to believe in the life after death, from another she has made it easier; for she discloses the universe as a storehouse of forces and elements, more subtle and complex by far than the dreams of the old-world physicists had ever conceived; and the Pauline notion of a "spiritual body," however unthinkable, cannot be deemed impossible. Nor must we forget in this connection that the psychical research movement, in spite of its vagaries and its willingness in the person of some of its representatives to accept as proven on slight evidence the most stupendous doctrines, has nevertheless made a significant contribution to our subject. There is no denying that it is creating for many minds an atmosphere favourable to belief in human immortality. It is doing this not because it has proved the spiritistic hypothesis, for no adequate proof of this hypothesis has as yet been offered; but because it has re-

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vealed the extraordinary resources, the marvellous possibilities of our inner world—possibilities which in ordinary life scarce reveal a trace of their presence. For example, thought-transference, or communication from mind to mind otherwise than through the known channels of sense, may now be regarded as exceedingly probable.¹ The long arm of coincidence cannot account for the connection which has been found to exist between death and apparitions of the dying to persons at a distance. It is true that the nature of the connection, whether physical or psychological, and the conditions under which it appears, have not been made out.²

The phenomena of mediumship, when clari-

¹“For nearly thirty years the investigators of the Society for Psychical Research have worked at the subject and have brought forward a body of evidence based partly on experiment, partly on observation, sufficient, at any rate, to establish thought-transference or telepathy as a working hypothesis.”—F. Podmore: *Mesmerism and Christian Science* (1909), p. 168.

²Nevertheless the fact of the connection is scarcely open to doubt.

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fied of the deception, conscious and unconscious, to which mediums seem peculiarly liable, appear to indicate that the existence of mind is not absolutely dependent on the brain and nervous system. Some investigators are of opinion that there are persons of a peculiar organisation whose bodily organism can be controlled by foreign personalities, and, all unknown to themselves, communicate knowledge which could not have been obtained by any normal means. Modern research, if it can give us proof of the existence of discarnate spirits, ought not to be despised. If we are convinced of the reality of these mysterious phenomena, then we have a strong argument wherewith to support the Gospel history when it declares that Christ rose from the dead and revealed Himself to more than five hundred disciples. So strong is this argument that the late Mr. F. W. H. Myers ventured the bold prophecy: "In consequence of the new evidence, all reasonable men a century hence will believe

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the Resurrection of Christ, whereas in default of the new evidence, no reasonable men a century hence would have believed it.”¹ The ground of this prophecy is, of course, the recognition of the uniformity of law, which makes the uniqueness of an event its almost inevitable refutation. Communication from the unseen to the seen must imply laws identical from age to age, like the laws of chemistry or of motion. William James, a singularly open-minded and fearless investigator, felt that after thirty years’ exploration in this mysterious region, he was forced to accept one of two theories, the theory that discarnate spirits could communicate with this world, or the theory that communication to living minds is possible otherwise than through the recognised channels of sense. On the whole, the balance of probability appeared to be in favour of the former hypothesis. And yet to rest the whole weight

¹ *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death*, Vol. II, p. 288.

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of immortality on the evidence as it stands at present would be a hazardous proceeding. To sum up this part of our discussion: physiological psychology cannot forbid faith in a future life. If it is impossible to conceive how the mind can think without a brain, it is equally impossible to conceive how the mind can think with a brain. If mind is at the mercy of physical processes, it is equally true that physical processes can be profoundly affected by mind; that, as modern surgery seems to show, mind can utilise fresh parts of its physical environment should its accustomed seat of operations be destroyed or removed. And so physiological science leaves the way open for the belief if on other grounds the belief is justified.

There is another science, however, which has made immense strides in our time, and which, it is confidently alleged, has given the deathblow to the hope of a life beyond. Biology knows no immortality, except possibly in the case of certain unicellular organisms

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which can renew their life indefinitely by division; but our conscious souls are mortal, and die with the physical organisms of which they are the functions. If it be asked on what biological ground we are forced to this despairing conclusion, M. Metchnikoff, in his work on the *Nature of Man*, leaves us in no uncertainty; for, to put his thesis briefly, man is not, as religion supposes, a being unlike other beings, made in the image of God, animated with the Divine breath and immortal, but a kind of miscarriage of an ape, endowed with profound intelligence, and capable of great progress. The first man was a zoölogical monstrosity, appearing suddenly with qualities denied to his parents, much as the famous calculating boy, Jacques Inaudi, burst upon an astonished Europe a few years ago, from an ancestor in which no premonition of his extraordinary gifts could be discerned. A capacity for progress, resulting from the possession of a spacious cranium with a brain of abnormal size,

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was transmitted from the lucky anthropoid ape to his descendants, and enabled them to propagate and eventually outstrip their kinsmen and to gain dominion over them. Man, then, is a kind of "sport," an accidental variation from the monkey tribe, arriving we know not how, but in essence the same as the stock from which he sprang. Hence to the question, "Is there a future life?" M. Metchnikoff replies unhesitatingly, "No. As the progeny of the anthropoid apes man shares their fate." "A future life," he says, "has no single argument to support it, and the non-existence of life after death is in consonance with the large range of human knowledge." Now, that we are allied by a thousand links to the lower creatures has become since Darwin a commonplace of cultivated thought. *How* man sprang from his sub-human progenitor we do not know: for, of course, M. Metchnikoff's theory is a mere guess, and is tantamount to a surrender of the problem as in-

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soluble. But that man has risen from the non-human to the human, from barbarism to civilisation, may be taken as proved. It is not necessary, as Huxley said, to base man's dignity upon his great toe, or assume that he is lost if an ape has a hippo-campus minor. For man is what he is and cannot be identified with that from which he emerged. The true nature of a cause reveals itself only in the effect. The germ from which a dog develops is indistinguishable from the germ which produces a philosopher; yet the philosopher is not a dog. Whatever man may have been in the past, we know in a measure what he is in the present. And it is his nature as actually disclosed in history that we must scrutinise when we raise the question of his spiritual permanence. The great problem then is, *What is man?* If in essence he is one with the brute creation, a superior species of ape, then it would be absurd to attribute to him moral freedom or the power of realising the immanent possibilities of his

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nature, and an immortal future for him would as a consequence be meaningless. As a mass of inert tendency he would be a mere link in the chain of being, a means to an end, not an end in himself. Or again, if his personality is the product or effect of a collocation of particles of highly organised chemical constitution wrought up into the elaborate mechanism of the brain, it follows, of course, that the dissipation of these particles means the dissipation of the man himself.

CHAPTER IX

IMMORTALITY AND HUMAN NATURE

IN the preceding chapter we have been listening to the discouraging inferences which some biologists and psycho-physicists have drawn from their respective sciences. But we may find reassurance in the reflection that these sciences are concerned not with essential man, only with aspects of him, abstractions from the concrete reality—man. To pierce to the core of human nature we must listen to the students of the spiritual life. “What, then, is man?” asks Carlyle. “He endures but for an hour and is crushed before the moth. Yet in the being and in the working of a faithful man is there already (as all faith from the beginning gives assurance) a something that pertains not to this wild death-element of time, that triumphs over time, and is and will be when time shall

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be no more.” Nor is this the mere enthusiastic utterance of an imaginative mind. Reflection assures us that all the sciences—physical, chemical, biological—are themselves products, not of unconscious unreason, but of conscious, rational life. Blot out from the universe self-conscious mind and these sciences disappear, and while doubtless some entity would remain, we may be sure it would be no entity of which we can form the slightest conception. What is this mysterious principle which antedates everything and which seems to be the only kind of being that is its own *raison d’être* and exists in its own right? Of all the wonders in the universe, this organisation of psychic energies wedded to a material organism to which we give the name of personality, is the most wonderful. We may best conceive it as a centre of energy, conscious of itself, rounding itself into a self-contained personal individuality. Whence comes this capacity for self-consciousness? Evolution cannot explain it. It

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can only show how it develops. It is impossible to believe that personal self-hood can be created by any number of material forces, themselves absolutely impersonal. The more this self-conscious spiritual energy is studied, the more astonishing its powers appear. It is conscious of successive experiences, is able to grasp them as an intelligible unity which yet it transcends. Nay, more, it grasps not only things that are, but also things that might be, distinguishes between the possible and the impossible, yet knows itself not identical with any of its states. It is a self-unifying power, conscious of being not a mere series of psychic events, but of being a spiritual and personal whole. It is by his power of thought that man wrestles with the complexity and subtlety of natural phenomena and wrings out of them order, beauty, a cosmos in which he is at home everywhere. The astronomer's physical frame is confined by the walls of his observatory, but his mind sweeps the orbit of

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the earth, tracks the solar system as it sounds its way through boundless space. Nor does the Milky Way, the confines of the stellar universe, avail to stay the flight of his speculative imagination. He can pierce through it, though his telescope may not, and wonder what lies beyond. And if space is powerless to limit intelligence, so also is time. Appearing for a brief and hurried moment, man is "a being of large discourse, looking before and after," able to reconstruct the vanished past and make men and empires live again; or to press forward into the unknown and behold visions of worlds not yet realised. A creature, like the lowest organisms, of birth, growth, decay, and death, product of forces that are beyond his control, he yet feels himself independent of nature and of her laws, with a reason that reflects as a mirror the infinite Thought that besets him on every side. We call man a creature of time; and in a sense, so he is: but historic philosophy assures us that in another and deeper sense

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he is its creator. The consciousness of time is not derived from something outside us and independent of us, as uncritical reflection supposes; it is the product of our conscious souls, the principle by which the soul organises its experiences into intelligible relations. This means that man is not lost amid the endless experiences of sense; he is their master and lord, himself the citizen of an eternal world. Hence the great creative epochs in the realm of intellect have set death at naught and proclaimed immortality as alone worthy of man's being. The Golden Age of Greek philosophy, the Renaissance, the German Idealistic movement, culminating in Goethe, the personal idealism of Emerson and Carlyle and their disciples—all these great stirrings of the human intellect have carried with them implicit or explicit faith in the life beyond. "Their creative work," says Eucken, speaking of the German Humanists, "renders them so conscious of their superiority to mere time limitations,

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gives them such a feeling of being possessed by a power which cannot perish, that they find it impossible to admit the entire reversion of man to nature, or to hold that death implies the complete extinction of the spiritual life.”¹

But wonderful as is man's power of thought, his capacity for ideal character is still more wonderful. If conscience can make him at times a coward, at other moments it makes him a hero. He divines something within him which no natural history can explain, the categorical imperative, as Kant called it, obedience to which issues in a well-knit personality, clearly defined and separate not only from the shifting scenery of this world but from the Infinite God Himself. Through the effort to obey conscience we gain an ever richer fulness of being. We are not merely caused, but are causes. We can create character. We can organise and spiritualise the raw material given us by

¹ *The Problem of Human Life*, p. 463.

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heredity and nature. We can wrestle with passion and subdue evil impulse and pour into the veins of moral weakness the iron of noble purpose. Still more, there are times, all too rare, when, as we say, we rise above ourselves. The interests of life, the dull routine of our daily work, the conventions of the social order to which we belong, act as inhibitions on our deeper psychic energies, and all too successfully conceal the slumbering possibilities of moral greatness. But let some catastrophe break through convention; let some sudden call of duty or affection sound in our sluggish ears, and in a moment the mask is thrown off, inward energies awake, and in self-forgetting devotion we take up burdens and share others' griefs and pour contempt on death itself. And what is this but a witness of the truth that we are infinitely more every moment than we know, that our true home is not earth and time, but God and eternity?

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As we listen to the dictates of conscience, we hear it speak in prophetic tones, except where it has been outraged by a life of deliberate wrong-doing. It points to another order than this, in which every man will receive according to his work. It cannot tolerate the supposition that death levels all men at last, the just and the unjust, the tyrant and his victim, a Nero and a St. Paul, a Judas and a St. John, and mingles the dust of the noblest and the vilest of humanity in the same forgotten grave. I cannot, indeed, agree with the distinguished American divine when, in the spirit of some of the early Christian writers, he says: "If there is no reasonable basis for belief in a life after death . . . if into that sleep no dreams can come, then I for one am ready to justify suicide and to declare that the greatest fools are those who deny themselves any pleasure that will not in this life give them pain."¹

¹ A. H. Bradford: *Heredity and Christian Problems*, p. 238.

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This is surely to misconceive the foundations on which a genuinely moral life rests. Goodness is goodness, quite apart from consequences—good for the life that now is, quite apart from consideration of the life to come. Purity, self-sacrifice, a love of truth—these things are in themselves good and valid, and the soul feels that they must be held fast even though the whole material universe should conspire to contradict them. To abandon the life of goodness or to commit suicide because of a waning faith in immortality, is to despise the best means by which such a faith can be generated. Devotion to duty, the noble bearing of pain, the doing of God's will even in the darkest night when not a single star is visible in the heavens, is the discipline which raises within the soul the great hope that such high endeavours cannot end in dust and nothingness. On the other hand, it must be admitted, that except in the case of a few select spirits, sin and goodness cannot have the same significance

to the man who believes as to the man who does not believe in a future life. If I believe that in the long run it makes no difference whether I have fought for God or for the devil, I may fight on nerved by a kind of grim stoicism; but it will be with a feeling of despair, with a sense that I am already defeated. Such a belief carries with it terrible consequences. It involves a tragedy so stupendous that all the dark and sinister events of human history beside it are as nothing. "The prophets, the martyrs, their noble anguish, vain and meaningless; the wise, whose thought strove to eternity and was but an idle dream; the pure in heart, whose life was a vision of the living God; the suffering and the mourners, whose solace was in a world to come; the victims of injustice who cried to the Judge Supreme—all gone down into silence and the globe that bare them circling dead and cold through soundless space."¹

¹ Geo. Gissing: *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, p. 179.

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Such a tragedy is not, indeed, unthinkable, but when the idea is fully grasped it provides its own antidote; for on such a supposition the world is not merely an enigma, it is an enigma without a meaning, a riddle without any solution, a mystery forever hidden from human apprehension. Our moral experience on such a tragic supposition cannot be harmonised, and the impulse or demand of human nature for harmony is itself a delusion. Did such a conviction seize hold of the minds of men, human action would be smitten with an incurable paralysis, and moral chaos would be our lot. The very principles by virtue of which we are able to redeem human life from confusion and despair are the very principles which constrain us to believe that a man's earthly experience is but a fragment of his spiritual history.

The essence of man's being is not only thought and righteousness: it is also love. And love, it is universally confessed, is

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divine if there is anything divine in the universe. There is an infinitude in love which demands infinite scope for its exercise. We begin by loving parent and friend, but go on to love wife and child and home. But the more we love, the more capacity for love grows, and if it is not to die, it must reach out and embrace humanity and God. Can we believe that such an energy as this must at last lie beaten in the dust? Can death conquer at last the power that more than once in history has laughed it to scorn? It is conceivable that love would accept annihilation for itself if the order of the world so demands—accept it with firm submission, however hard such a fate might seem. But there is one thing it could not and would not tolerate, and that is the annihilation of the being loved. Who that has watched by the death-bed of one whom he has loved, and marked the fading away of all that made the loved one dear, has not felt a wrath against death, as against

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a supreme injustice? And what is this feeling but the testimony of our nature to the indestructible worth of personality?

“ If Death were seen
At first as Death, Love had not been,
Or been in narrowest working shut.—
Mere fellowship of sluggish mind.”¹

Very significant is the reflection that if death is conqueror at last, it is not the coarse, the selfish, the materialistic who will suffer, but those of sensitive affection and tender conscience, who cannot tolerate the thought that men and women who have never had a chance here will find no fresh opportunity elsewhere. Do you say: “ I am conscious of no craving for a post-mortem existence. This life has been rich and full, a banquet of the gods. I am satisfied and want no more? ” Be it so. But what of the others, for whom existence has been a long crucifixion; the victims of that most terrible of all tragedies, suppression of the intellectual and spiritual energies by the brute force of

¹ *In Memoriam*, stanza 35.

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heredity and circumstance? Think of the myriads predestined to pauperism and crime, "damned into this world and damned through it,"—can we believe that they are also damned out of it? Call up in imagination the hospitals, where men and women bear the burden of incurable disease, insane asylums, where tortured spirits cry out in agony. Pass into the slums and purlieus of any of our great cities, and mark there the dwarfed and gin-sodden forms through which degraded souls look out at you, and the only power that will save you from madness and despair is the faith that sin and suffering are not the last act of the human drama, but that behind the veil God has in reserve resources of blessing and consolation, that men and women cursed here by a fatal heritage will there find an open door, a fresh chance to win the secret of life. The only assumption that can annul the force of this argument is that the universe at heart is neither rational nor moral, or, what comes

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to the same thing, that the tragedy of our humanity is played in an infinite void, without a purpose and signifying nothing. The revolt of the soul against such a ghastly imagination is a witness in behalf of a nobler thought.

It is when we enter the sphere of religion that the idea of a future life becomes even more insistent and is alone sufficient to meet the deepest demand of the soul. The profoundest necessities of the human spirit come latest into the light of clear consciousness. "That was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual."¹ Hence, as man's religious consciousness grows his conception of a future life becomes more and more spiritual. Now, Christianity, which is the highest expression of the religious spirit, is also the religion of immortality. It is frequently said that Jesus has very little to say about eternal life, and theologians are hard pressed to ac-

¹I. Cor. xv, 46.

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count for this reticence. Tolstoi goes the length of saying that the idea of immortality is foreign to the thought of Jesus and is no genuine element of the Christian religion. So far from this being true, it were more correct to say that the eternal issues of life, the imminence of a kingdom into which all destined to immortal blessedness must pass, were the background of all His teaching. For Him the *end*, the winding up of human history and the inauguration of a supernatural kingdom, a new heaven and a new earth, were events at the door. His ironic and paradoxical attitude towards life, as seen in a pessimism arising out of a profound discontent with the present order of things, yet implying a deeper optimism, a faith in the power and goodness of God, His teaching about property and charity and self-sacrifice, His ethical doctrine as a whole—all these were explicable only in the light of His belief that the natural order is liable at any moment to vanish before the onset of spiritual powers

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which for the moment God is holding in check and which when realised will mark the end of all that is mortal, the beginning of an order that is immortal.¹

Unquestionably, Jesus took over the ideas about the end of the world and the establishment of the Kingdom of God from the late Jewish Apocalyptic literature, though His mind, we may be sure, was too spiritual to take literally the fantastic forms with which these ideas were clothed. The form of His expectation was disappointed. The Church looked in vain for His return in visible glory. Nevertheless, in a deeper sense His Kingdom did come. The death upon the cross, which seemed to be the ruin of all His hopes, became the instrument of His victory, the most potent means of founding the Kingdom as an imperishable fact destined to survive all the catastrophes of history. The eschatological hope of the men of the first century was destined to perish; but well has it been

¹ Mark xiii, 30; ix, 1; Matthew x, 23.

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said that "in its death-pangs eschatology bore to the Greek genius a wonder-child, the mystic, sensuous, early Christian doctrine of immortality, and consecrated Christianity as the religion of immortality to take the place of the slowly dying civilisation of the ancient world."¹

While the thought of Jesus is permeated with the reality of the world beyond, compared with which this present world seems to Him as insubstantial as a cloud, He has but little to say as to its precise conditions and circumstances. How could the conditions of the other world be expressed or made intelligible in human language? Moreover, must we not believe that in matters which had no practical bearing on religion Christ's knowledge was limited, as it was in matters of science and historical criticism? As a matter of fact, religious history shows, as in the case of ancient Egypt, that a people may have what

¹Schweitzer: *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, p. 254.

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assumes to be the most precise knowledge of the state of matters beyond the grave without experiencing thereby any particular moral stimulus. On the other hand, He lets drop some hints which have great ethical weight. For example, in the Parable of Dives and Lazarus he affirms the psychic continuity and identity of character. Abraham can say to Lazarus: "Son, remember!" But "memory" means that the man after death is in all essential matters the same man as before death; and the inference is inevitable that here and now man makes for himself the conditions of his future life. In His argument with the Sadducee His words are at once critical of the popular Pharisaic and of the sceptical Sadducean view of the resurrection of the dead. As against the Pharisaic notion of a material resurrection He teaches that earthly appetites and a physical body, necessary for the present life, will disappear; that only the soul lives on and inherits the Kingdom of God. As against the Sadducean

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unbelief in a future life, He shows the certainty of personal continuance after death. To Him it is inconceivable that a creature who has once been the object of Divine favour should go down into annihilation. God declares Himself to Moses as being the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob; but there was much more in this saying than met the eye. The God who has been the God of these ancient men while they were on earth will be also their God beyond death. Therefore, in the strict sense these men are not dead but living. Death is only a veil that hides the reality of life. Life is the ultimate fact in the universe: death is but a passing episode. Christ's great word is based on the idea that belief in God and belief in a future life stand or fall together. Experience shows this to be a fact. In proportion as the belief in God is strong, lofty, and dominant, the belief in a future life gains in intensity and clearness. Where God is regarded as unknowable, or where the sense of His per-

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sonality is weakened and law or energy or some other impersonal entity takes His place, faith in immortality suffers and eventually fades away. If we accept Christ's revelation of a God perfect in love and wisdom, we must believe that He means all souls to share His blessedness. He proclaims God as a Father whose essence is self-sacrificing love, and who as the inspiration and unifying bond of all souls, gives himself eternally to each. And just because of this, man is a reality, not a nonentity. In other words, he is free to realise his God-given nature, and the Divine love can put no barriers in the way of his upward growth, for this love has called him into being and makes him a partaker in its riches.

All students of the New Testament are agreed that Christianity is built on the faith of the early disciples, that Jesus, who was crucified and buried, broke the bonds of death and reappeared on earth. They differ as to whether this belief corresponded to any ob-

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jective fact, or was merely a psychological illusion. No one, however, disputes the fact that had it not been for faith in the Resurrection the cause of Jesus would have perished with Him in His grave. The tradition of the event which has come down to us in the Gospels is disjointed, incoherent, and fragmentary. Under critical analysis it threatens to break up and dissolve away. But another and an older tradition is preserved in a document the authenticity of which is uncontested. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians takes us back to within twenty-five years of the death of Jesus; and in this Epistle the writer sets forth in grave and measured language the common Gospel of the Resurrection. No criticism can overthrow the testimony here adduced. St. Paul tells us that Christ rose from the dead and appeared to Peter and to five hundred disciples at once, the majority of whom were living at the time he wrote. And in the later tradition preserved in the Gospels we have

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subtle corroboration of the appearance to Peter. It was this manifestation which marked a critical turning-point in the history of Christianity. Let us recall the situation. After the crucifixion, Peter and the rest fled. The death of their Master meant ruin, irremediable and absolute. It was not His death merely that paralysed their faith, it was the thought that He died on the cross. Such a death was the Divine refutation of His Messianic scheme, and branded his life-work as a futility. A few weeks passed by, and these despairing souls gathered together and confronted their enemies with the astounding message: "The Crucified is risen." On this faith, as all admit, the Church was founded. To-day Christianity embraces about one-third of the human race, and that third the most progressive and most enlightened. Not only so, but all civilised men, in proportion to the height of culture attained by them, are looking toward Christianity or toward some religion of which Christianity

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is the germ, as the future world-religion. These are indisputable facts. What sort of a world must it be if these great historical phenomena turn out to be founded not on some reality, but on the excited fancy of a *hallucinée*, as Renan calls Mary Magdalene? No! reflection insists that an adequate cause must be granted, and returns again and again to the thought that something must have happened after the Crucifixion to bring into existence such a mighty faith. What was that *something*? Now, the permanent value of belief in the Resurrection cannot lie in the manner or mode of its accomplishment. Whether Christ rose from the dead in the same physical organism which was laid in the tomb, or whether His body dissolved, as ours will do, and He himself issued from the kingdom of the dead clothed in a spiritual body; whether He revealed Himself outwardly or only inwardly to His Disciples—these things are not vital to Christian thought and faith, and therefore the signifi-

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cance of the Resurrection cannot lie in them. Where, then, does it lie? It lies in the conviction generated by the Spirit of God through some real though not necessarily physical appearance of the Saviour, that He still lived, that He had broken the barriers of the grave, that He was still a power in the world. Do you say such an event is against all experience and therefore incredible? But we live in a world full of mysteries, and no event can be deemed incredible that is not impossible in the nature of things. What do we know of life or death, that we can say what is possible or impossible in these mysterious realms? What do we know of perfect goodness and absolute oneness with God, that we dare assert that not even the one perfectly good being this earth has known could not recross the barriers of the Beyond to save from shipwreck the faith of those who had staked their dearest hopes upon His cause? Whether the evidence for the Resurrection will win our faith depends to some

extent on the presuppositions with which we come to the evidence. If we believe in God and in the reality of another world we will have little difficulty in believing in a real manifestation of Jesus Christ in the world of sense after His death. What is the relation between the fact of the Resurrection of Christ and the belief in a future life? The popular theology relates the two as cause and effect; but we have seen that the belief in immortality springs out of the deepest instincts of the soul and is quite independent of this or that historical event. And yet the early followers of Jesus felt that His Resurrection had brought immortality to light—that is, had invested the idea with a clearness and vividness hitherto unknown. And, as a matter of historical fact, belief in immortality has been strongest, has coloured life and activity most deeply, in proportion as faith in Christ has been strong and vigorous. “Whatever,” says Harnack, “may have happened at the grave and in the matter

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of the appearances, one thing is certain—from this grave has sprung the indestructible faith in the overthrow of death and in an eternal life. . . . Wherever to-day against all the impressions of nature there exists a strong faith in the infinite worth of the soul, wherever death has lost its terrors, wherever the sufferings of this world are measured against a future glory, there is bound up with these vital feelings the conviction that Jesus Christ has forced his way through death; that God has awakened Him and raised Him to life and glory.”¹ It is true that this is a conviction rather than a demonstration, and there is still much left to perplex our minds. But so it must be. Not to man the thinker, but to man the believer, the hero of moral struggles and the child of God, to man able to make the sublime venture of faith, the Easter message comes with power to confirm the prophecies and set its seal upon the ineradicable instincts of the soul.

¹ *Das Wesen des Christentums*, p. 102.

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For that message assures us that whatever else death may take from us, it is powerless to dim the great realities of Home and Love and Brotherhood, or quench the vital energy of a spirit born of God and shielded by His goodness.

CHAPTER X

RELIGION IN MODERN SOCIETY

THERE is no more urgent question than the place and function of religion in the modern world. Some persons affect to think that the day of religion is past, and that at best it may still be tolerated as a valuable police measure to keep the humbler classes in order, or as an attractive element in the æsthetic outfit of the feminine mind. With such persons there is no argument here. They must be referred to a deeper study of the human soul and of the tendencies of their age. The great mass of men are convinced that religion is a reality. Their difficulties arise when they try to understand religion, and above all, when they try to bring it into vital relations with the whole realm of experience. What men are asking to-day is

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this: Granted the reality of religion, what is its contribution to modern life?

Now, the institution which claims to represent the Christian religion, to incarnate the spirit of its Founder, and to realise His ideals, is the Church. There is a widespread feeling that the Church is not substantiating these claims. When its achievements are set alongside the life and work of the Son of Man, they appear to be seriously deficient, both in quantity and in quality. We have already seen that Jesus brings a message with two aspects, corresponding to life in its normal, healthy, and ordered state, and to life in its abnormal, disordered, unhealthy state. Is the Church adequately representing its Master in both of these elements of His Gospel? If not, why not?

The prophetic side of Christ's ministry is represented to-day in the office of the preacher. How far, then, does modern preaching realise the aims of Christ in calling men to virtue, in solving their doubts

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and perplexities, in revealing to them new vistas of truth and in leading them to new moral achievements? A glance at history shows the great things that sermons have done in the past. They have made kings and potentates feel the stings of an awakened conscience. They have created great revivals of religion, in which thousands have been swept into the Kingdom. They have moved peoples to undertake the work of self-regeneration. They have strengthened the patriot's arm, turned cowards into heroes, filled with a holy enthusiasm against evil the hearts of multitudes. They have brought light to the perplexities, and assuagement to the miseries of their time. Is the power of preaching gone forever? Is the human voice bereft of its ancient magic when it would plead for the sublimest realities within the compass of human imagination? There are, indeed, causes for misgiving. The situation is paradoxical. Never were men more preoccupied by religious and

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ethical problems than now, and never were they more anxious to hear the helpful and the enlightening word about God, the soul, the art of right living, the significance of life here, and the hope of a life hereafter. The agnosticism which threatened to paralyse the spiritual energies of the generation passing away has disappeared. The mystery of the universe has once again fallen upon man and has challenged him to find some answer to the age-long quest. Never was there such an opportunity of leadership for the preacher as the present affords. But the sad confession must be made that it is not to the pulpit that men look to-day for a solution of their urgent problems. The professor's lecture, the review article, the newer drama, the formal treatise—it is these that have assumed the power which once the pulpit owned. And yet the Word of God is not bound, though its preachers are. And there are signs that a renaissance of religious eloquence is at hand, strong enough to voice the

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aspirations and inspire the energies of the modern world. In this rebirth of the preacher's art for which we long, we may be sure that two weaknesses which at present disfigure it will disappear. In the first place, it will be marked by sound and thorough religious thinking, by the note of intellectual conviction, which is too absent to-day. It is hard to escape the feeling that the average preacher has never been inspired with a sense of the ethical and intellectual grandeur of Christianity, has never realised its boundless wealth of truth which, touching man at every point, lifts him out of time into eternity and satisfies the craving of the intellect for unity, largeness, and power. Read any of the great preachers who have made a mark upon their own and succeeding generations—Chrysostom, Baxter, Edwards, Channing, Phillips Brooks—and you will find that beneath their flowers of eloquence, their poetry and mysticism, their glowing fervour of appeal, there is a solid subtruc-

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ture of ideas, an order of majestic truths, which gives a solidity and massive splendour to the discourse. The cry of the hour is for men who will do for our time what these men did for theirs, who will re-study and revitalise the regnant ideas of the Gospel of Christ, who will steep them in the living realities of experience and make them once more the possession of heart and conscience.

The second weakness which in the coming time will disappear from the pulpit will be its lack of positive suggestions, of practical effectiveness in bringing religious ideas to bear upon life. The temperament of the preacher is such that he is liable to be so absorbed in the ideal aspects of truth as to neglect the scientific and practical means by which the truth may be realised. President King rightly charges much preaching with being a "mere exhortation, giving no practical suggestion of positive achievement."¹ It is being more and more recog-

¹ *Rational Living*, p. 188.

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nised that law obtains in the spiritual no less than in the natural realm. Hence, the modern man is anxious to know what these spiritual laws are and how they may be utilised for the enrichment and expansion of life. To take one concrete illustration. Recent science has proved that the law of habit is of profound significance in the religious, as in other spheres of life. Hence, it is of vital importance that people should know how this law operates—what is its basis, how evil habits may be dropped and good habits cultivated. It is not enough to glorify the face of goodness. Men must be taught the methods by which they can make goodness their own. The pulpit that is to command the respect of the world to-day must be rich in suggestiveness, in scientific aim; in hints that make for practice.

Let us now turn to the other aspect of Christ's message. We have seen that although Jesus moved among all classes, high and low, rich and poor, with the ease and

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freedom of a comrade, yet there were certain groups that lay especially close to His heart—the destitute, the sick, the unfortunate. He spent no small part of His time in comforting and relieving these. In the great Judgment scene¹ He identifies Himself with the poor, the sick, the criminal, the unhappy in mind or body, or both; and He makes the final destiny of men to depend on their attitude to Him, as represented by these classes. “Inasmuch as ye did it or did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it or did it not unto Me.” Here, then, is the searching, sifting question: Is the Church to these classes to-day what Jesus Christ was in Palestine? Here are three problems which confront the Church to-day: The problem of poverty; the problem of sickness; and the problem of crime.

(1) What message has religion, as represented by the Church, for the poor, and what has it to say about poverty? The problem

¹ Matthew xxv, 31-46.

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of the poor, which is so insistent in modern society, receives small notice in the teaching of Christ. He views everything in the light of the dazzling vision of a regenerated social state from which the pressing cares and bodily sufferings of men would be forever banished. The poor in spirit are the true heirs of the untold riches of the coming kingdom. Let Cæsar have his own—what matters? The phantasmagoria of life passes quickly. The soul's enduring possession is in God. Christ's message was not primarily concerned with material welfare, but rather with detachment from material thralldom. In His own utter detachment from material things, in His perfect renunciation of all forms of self-hood, are His liberty, His power, His oneness with the Father. The early Church glorified poverty, yet it heaped up mountains of riches. It taught renunciation, yet it grasped the sceptre of Cæsar. Hence came about a great distortion of His teaching. Jesus justified poverty in so far

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as it lessened the chances of slavery to the things of sense. In itself it was not a good, yet as the servant of the will it might minister to the needs of the spirit. But the Church made poverty an end in itself, with the result that all life became impoverished and the healthy instincts of human nature crippled. In Christ's view, the mission of poverty was to ennoble life, to make man larger, happier, and more effective. But it could only achieve its mission when self-imposed, as part of life's discipline, and as opening into higher regions of activity and happiness and spiritual freedom. Our Lord, in asking the rich young man to sell all that he had and give to the poor, was not suppressing natural feelings, but was opening to the soul the gates of a new life.

Poverty, as we know it to-day, however, presents quite a different aspect. It lies as an intolerable load on multitudes of God's children. It involves no exercise of the will, no choice of the higher good, and offers no

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outlet into larger freedom. It degrades, debases, and enslaves man. It pollutes and destroys, but no longer emancipates. It often leads to temptation, sin, crime, and suicide. It is the product of social injustice and inequalities which embitter life at both ends of the scale. The poverty that is wrought into the very structure of modern society does, indeed, detach men from material treasures, but it brings no enrichment to the soul. What has the Church to say to the ten millions of poverty-stricken persons in the United States, four millions of whom would starve were it not for the intervention of the State? The Church is deeply concerned in this matter, for abject poverty well-nigh sterilises the moral and spiritual influences which might otherwise bless and sanctify the vast stretches of hopeless and unimaginative toil. But poverty that is freely accepted at the bidding of some lofty inspiration is one thing: whereas the poverty which strips life of opportunity, creates sad-

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ness and misunderstanding, forbids the simple pleasures of the home, shuts up the sufferer in a solitude and shadows his path with fear and despair, is another and a very different thing. Take one fact alone. There are five million workingwomen in this country. A large proportion of these exist (they can scarcely be said to live) in rotting and crowded tenements, bereft of the commonest decencies. How can these poor women know any of the joys of the spirit, or any freedom of thought, or any sense of the worth and dignity of life? If the Church is to carry out, is to realise the aim of its Founder, it must apply to the life conditions of these and such as these, the truths of the Christian Gospel.

First of all, it is the duty of the Church to proclaim the sacredness of all men in God's eyes, to crown each with direct and personal responsibility for his own immortal destiny, to found the structure of human society upon a law of love (which, indus-

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trially, is the law of co-operation), and to drive out greed and selfishness from the hearts of men. So far as poverty is a malignant power, cankering the heart with care, filling life with dread, paralysing the soul, dividing man from man, shutting God out of His world and making it impossible for millions of His children to commune with Him, in just so far is it a power against which the Church must pit its energies and wage relentless war. Hence, it is the duty of the Church to utter no uncertain sound on the great industrial and social problems. Must it, then, identify itself with the doctrine of Socialism in any of its forms? By no means. For while Christ's teaching meets at many points modern social strivings, the creed of Christ is not the creed of Socialism. If the Church cannot afford to be an instrument of Socialistic propaganda, still less can it afford to stand aloof from the great industrial and social problems, such as Child Labour, Congested Tenement Districts, Factory and Mill

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Systems, the Physical and Moral Education of Youth.

Secondly, to the Church is committed the task of proclaiming the moral structure of the universe, the eternal justice of God which lies at the heart of things. Hence the Church must insist on justice as an essential part of a state organised on Christian principles. The Church itself is dependent, for the most part, on the well-to-do, in order that it may carry on its beneficent enterprises. Yet if, notwithstanding its need of material support, it falters in proclaiming the absoluteness of the ideal in the social order, if it fails to insist that the industrial order is not a section of life governed by principles of its own, but ultimately rests upon a moral order the central principle of which is justice, it is disloyal to its Master.

Thirdly, the Church must become once more Christ's almoner to the poor. It must not be content with taking care of the few destitute people belonging to its membership.

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It must brace itself for the task of bringing into the homes of all the poverty-ridden classes not only the relief that is needed, but the spiritual influence, the moral uplift of Christian sympathy. The work of ministering to the poor must no longer be left exclusively to Charitable Boards and Associations, excellent in many respects though the work of these may be. The Church can do something for the poor that these organisations cannot do. It can console the unhappy, and the destitute, and train the soul in the spiritual values of life. It can remove fear and misgiving from the heart. It can bring peace to the distracted spirit through a sense of fellowship and brotherhood.¹

(2) Let us now consider the Church's relation to sickness. We owe to Christian

¹To those who are interested in the relation of the Church to the social problem, I would commend F. I. Paradise's brilliant treatise on *The Church and the Individual*; F. G. Peabody's restrained but masterly discussion, *Jesus Christ and the Social Question*, and W. Rauschenbush's striking appeal, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*.

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Science the new emphasis on this urgent problem. We may denounce this cult as an unmitigated curse, a foe to true religion, a materialising of spiritual things, but in so doing we are merely mistaking a symptom for a disease. Dangerous as Christian Science undoubtedly is to the higher interests of religion, there are things still more dangerous, and those are the forces that have brought Christian Science into existence and that still operate in the churches. Only by destroying these forces will one cut at the roots of this heresy. A strained intellectualism that has been the especial bane of New England theology; a materialistic tradition in academic medicine; a lack on the part of organised Christianity of that primitive quality on which our Lord laid so much emphasis,—faith,—with a consequent failure to deliver men and women from burdens which God has not imposed; a refusal by the Church to test itself honestly by the character and work of its Lord and Master, and

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so an inability to follow His example in bringing His influence to bear on life as a whole—these are the main causes of this strange mixture of crude metaphysics, uncritical theology, irrational dialectic, absurd therapeutics, and unbalanced mysticism.¹ We may be sure that in turning to Christian Science, the starving soul is looking for something it cannot find in the historic Churches. To what straits it must be driven when it can feed on food such as this! As a young student of divinity I learned from Robertson of Brighton that at the root of all organised error there is a truth which gives it its power, makes it credible, and invests it with a lease of indefinite perpetuity. Christian Science will die, not by the rhetoric that only condemns, but by the insight that sees into its causes and interprets correctly its misguided efforts. How, then, can the

¹ The Rev. Lyman Powell, who has studied Christian Science more deeply and criticised it more trenchantly than any other writer, allows me to say that he heartily concurs in the above judgment.

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Church do this? By a return to the spirit and method of Jesus Christ. For Him, man in essence is a spiritual being whose “most serious concerns are those of character.” But He recognised, and the Church must recognise, that the spiritual life has mental and bodily conditions; that once these conditions are disordered, barriers are sometimes erected between the soul and God and a truly religious life is made well-nigh impossible. Must the Church acquiesce silently in this condition of things, if, by its higher faith, it can free the soul from obsessions and restore it to religious peace and service? Here there is no question of intruding into the sphere of the physician. But what we must ask is: Ought not the Church to bring to the sufferer what the wise physician wishes for him—a new outlook upon life, the energising of faith, a sense of self-control? Take one of the great curses of modern civilisation—alcoholism. The preacher denounces it as a sin; but the scientific man who has studied

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its phenomena, views it as a semi-physical, semi-moral disorder. It is almost impossible to exaggerate the physical, mental, and spiritual evil which alcoholism produces. The pathologist, the neurologist, the physiologist, the psychiatrist, the criminologist, the moralist, the religious worker and reformer, join in an unanimous chorus of condemnation. Everybody knows that ordinary medical methods can do little for the victim of this disease; but everybody may not know that all scientific authorities to-day recognise that in religious faith we have a powerful therapeutic agent. As Professor James quotes, from some medical authority: "The only radical remedy I know for dipsomania is religio-mania."¹ Is the Church, then, to content itself with denouncing the drunkard, or even with such fragmentary and superficial remedies as temperance societies and open-air missions? On the contrary, it must go down beside the drunkard, and at the ex-

¹ *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 269 (footnote).

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penditure of personal service and sympathy and training, it must inspire him with a desire for help, and bring to him the help thus desired. And what the Church can do and ought to do for the drunkard, it can do and ought to do for thousands who are suffering as the drunkard suffers, from diseases of character, invasions of personality by some evil power which the message of Christ, properly applied, can cast out and keep out.

(3) The relation of the Church to the problem of crime and the criminal. Down to the middle of the eighteenth century the theory of crime, accepted as a commonplace by all civilised nations, and against which only an occasional voice protested, was that it was a wrong done to society which society was bound to punish with the utmost rigour. Having discharged the duty of revenge, society had no further concern with the wrong-doer. It is needless to add that the prisons, under the reign of this theory, were scenes of un-

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speakable atrocities. There was scarcely an offence that was not punishable by death, and by torture preceding death; and in this condition of affairs Church and State had acquiesced for centuries. In the year 1764 there appeared a pamphlet, issued anonymously, but afterwards acknowledged to be the work of an Italian nobleman, the Marquis Beccaria by name. This work, entitled *Crimes and Their Punishments*, struck a blow at received ideas and instituted a process of reform which, however slow and tentative, has not ceased from that date to this. Beccaria was a true child of the eighteenth century. He was a deist and a utilitarian. His formula was, "The greatest happiness of the greatest number." While he speaks with formal respect of religion, it is obvious that he has no real belief in it. He views crime and the treatment of the criminal purely from the standpoint of public utility. His aim is to show how the social order may be preserved, with the least possible inflic-

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tion of pain. A glance at some of the principles which he expounds shows that not even yet have we overtaken him.

“ In order that a punishment may attain its object, it is enough if the evil of the punishment exceeds the advantage of the crime; and in this excess of evil the certainty of punishment and the loss of possible advantage from the crime ought to be considered as part: all beyond this is superfluous and consequently tyrannical.

“ The more cruel punishments become, the more human minds harden, adjusting themselves like fluids to the level of the objects around them.

“ The death penalty is neither necessary nor expedient.

“ The more speedily and the more nearly in connection with the crime committed punishment shall follow, the more just and useful it will be.

“ No punishment for a crime can be called exactly just, that is, necessary, so long as the law has not adopted the best possible means in the circumstances of a country to prevent the crimes it punishes.

“ Would you prevent crimes? Then cause the laws to be clear and simple, bring the whole force of a nation to bear on their defence, and suffer no part of it to be used in overthrowing them.

“ Another way to prevent crimes is to reward virtue. If prizes offered by Academies to the discoverers of useful truths have caused the multiplication of knowledge and of good books, why

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should not virtuous actions also be multiplied by prizes distributed from the munificence of the sovereign?

“The surest but most difficult means of preventing crimes is the improvement of education.”

These ideas, diffused throughout Europe gradually, wrought a change in men's opinions. In this country the new leaven began to work as soon as the English connection had been thrown off. For example, at the beginning of the Revolutionary War there were in Pennsylvania nearly twenty crimes punishable by death. Eighteen years after the close of the war no crime was punishable by death except that of murder in the first degree. In this reform Pennsylvania was simply returning to the ideas of Penn at the founding of the colony, ideas which had been nullified by the English Government. The country, however, generally retained the old methods, with some alleviation of the physical distress attached to prison life.

The second great step in prison reform we owe to John Howard, the Englishman,

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who read and valued highly Beccaria's work. It was Howard who, by his researches into prison life, aroused at last the conscience of his countrymen. The evils which he found in the English prisons are beyond description. Innocent and guilty alike were herded together. Prisoners were allowed to obtain intoxicating drink, and drunkenness among them was almost universal. Hardly any attempt was made to influence criminals, morally or religiously, and the plague from time to time swept away large numbers of the prison population. Howard was a philanthropist, who had not studied the deeper questions connected with the causation of crime or its cure, but was almost wholly pre-occupied with the physical miseries which he witnessed. He did a great and ever-to-be-remembered work, and his influence still lives.

Modern interest in the treatment of the criminal arises from a number of causes. In the first place, the scientific interest in the

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nature of man; the rise of a criminal psychology, especially as represented by the investigations of such men as Lombroso and Ferri and Havelock Ellis. Their motto is, "heredity is the mother of crime, and environment is its father." In the second place, the new social spirit, which seeks to trace the relations of society to the individual and to find out how far social conditions create vice and crime. In the third place, the humanitarian spirit of the age, which revolts against the harshness and cruelty of earlier times, and which believes that sane and normal man has fundamental instincts that are good, and that through the cultivation of these instincts the evildoer can find a way back to normal social life. Lastly, the deeper and more spiritual theology of our age is slowly but surely undermining the old ideas of penalty. When God was regarded as an austere Lawgiver, issuing commands and exacting obedience through fear of consequences, it was natural that this theological

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conception should be reflected in an unsympathetic earthly jurisprudence. We have a striking illustration of the truth that the theology of a man has an important bearing upon his idea of crime and its punishment, in a recent utterance of Sir Robert Anderson, the former head of Scotland Yard. This expert in the detection of crime believes that all "professional criminals," to use his own phrase, should be, upon judicial condemnation, incarcerated for life in a special prison. He grounds this idea on the view that these men are absolutely incurable. When we turn to his religious views, we find that he maintains the validity of the Mosaic ideas of penalty, and that he has a very inadequate conception of the incurable optimism of the Christian religion.

On the other hand, it is a pleasure to learn that the two great principles underlying the modern treatment of crime affirmed by the recent International Prison Congress held at Washington are these: First, no person,

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whatever his age or record, should be assumed to be incapable of improvement. Second, it is in the interest of the public not merely to impose a sentence which is retributive and deterrent, but also to make an earnest effort for the reformation of the criminal. To these two principles I believe the time will come when a third will be added, and that is that the element of penalty should be thrown more and more into the background, and that all prisons should be conducted on industrial, not on retributive lines. Work in itself properly adjusted to the aptitudes of the individual has a therapeutic effect in diverting the mind from wrong ideas, in building up a sense of self-respect, in inspiring the worker with the feeling that he is worth something to the world and to himself. Prison reformers have never realised the splendid possibilities of work as a curative agency in moral disorders. If there is one fact which emerges clearly and distinctly out of the modern discussion of this problem, it

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is that the penal system has broken down and stands condemned in the eyes of every man who has studied it. A high judicial officer recently said to a friend of mine: "Everybody ought to understand that prisons never cure anybody of anything, and that nothing as a rule but evil can come to the individual from putting him in prison." I asked once the governor of an Irish prison about the reformatory effect of jail life upon the inmates. He replied: "This place reforms nobody. It keeps people safe." The motto of the new age will be not Penalty, but Reform. Immense as has been the progress in prison administration which this century has witnessed during the past forty years, there is still much work to be done before we even approximate to the views of enlightened students of the subject.

But I am here especially concerned with the influence of religion upon the prevention and cure of crime. In the various institutions for the punishment of those who have

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fallen under the censure of law—federal prisons, state prisons and penitentiaries, reformatories, county jails and workhouses—there is a population of some one hundred thousand. What has religion, as represented by the Church, to say to these people? “I was in prison and ye came unto me,” says the Founder of the Church. He here identifies Himself with man, the outcast and the criminal.

Christ would have us know that in every outlaw on whom the hand of man lies heavy, there is a buried, a hidden Christ, waiting to be evoked by the charm of sympathy and service. Is the Church carrying out the idea of its Master? Do the representatives of the Church know the moral and spiritual biography of every prisoner in the land? Does the criminal, in his loneliness and misery, think of the Church as his greatest friend? Does it represent to him the infinite compassion of God amid the hardness of man’s justice? Do any of the

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Church's ministers consecrate themselves to the study of the problems of crime and its punishment, of the criminal and his psychology? Is the Church taking advantage of the humanitarian note which characterises the social instincts of the modern world, to suggest and inaugurate reform in prison methods and in the general relations of the State to those whom it would punish? Is the Church attacking with all its might the causes that produce crime? Is it guarding the child against the commercial greed that would destroy his childhood? Is it protecting the mothers to be of the coming generation, so that the child may have its elementary right of being born well? Is it setting apart any of its ablest men, trained not only in theology, but in the study of human nature, normal and abnormal, in order that these may bring to bear upon the individual criminal the resources at once of religion and science? Some of these questions sound bitterly ironical.

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“Crime,” it has been well said, “is not so much a penal as a social question.” It is the symptom of social disease. To a very great extent it springs out of social inequalities, poverty, degraded surroundings, lack of moral, mental, or physical education. The psychiatrist tells us that crime often depends on physiological accidents. A slight injury to the brain, or the use of narcotic drugs, or the addiction to alcohol, may radically change a man’s character and transform a respectable and worthy citizen into a flagrant transgressor of law, human and divine. Doubtless the sociological and medical theories of crime are partially true. But, after all, it is neither man’s environment nor his brain that is the central element of the problem, but the man himself. It is true that there are many men in prison who ought never to have been sent there, offspring as they are of parents steeped in drink and immorality, and educated, as they have been, in the gutter, with not even the

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care that we bestow upon our domestic animals. Why should there not be moral asylums for these, just as there are asylums for the mentally diseased? In proportion as the causes of crime are studied and seen to be largely beyond the control of the criminal, in this proportion will the thought of retribution die out of the public mind, and in its place will come the thought of our social responsibilities for the wrong-doer, and of the best means to be employed for his cure and restoration to normal life. It is to be acknowledged that during the past few decades great reforms have been achieved—the segregation of the young, the sympathetic treatment of first offenders, the development of the probation system, and the new Borstal method employed in England, in which good diet, hard work at a useful trade, and rigid discipline, are the main factors—all these are most valuable and will bear good fruit; and doubtless the Christian spirit played no small part in bringing these

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reforms about. Nevertheless, the Church has not been the leader in this work of reform, though it has approved the work when once it was done. At the present time in England there are beneficent changes for the good of the prison population under the consideration of the Government; but the impulse was received, not from the Church, but from the stage. John Galsworthy's famous play, *Justice*, has given the death-blow to English prison conservatism.

Here, then, is the first duty which organised Christianity owes to the criminal. It must understand him and the forces that have made him, and it must so leaven the State with its own idealism that the only pain that should be inflicted is the pain necessarily involved in a change of character. But the Church owes much more than this. It must make religion a reality in the life of the prisoner; and to do this effectively the men who represent religion to the prisoner should be especially trained

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for that purpose. We need not underrate the value of emotional evangelism. Nevertheless, it has serious limitations. The prison needs an evangelism which does not merely provoke feeling, but which takes a calm and sane view of the facts and knows that moral defects and bad habits must be overcome by special methods. It is a pathetic fact that many criminals do not love crime for its own sake, are profoundly miserable, and think that in religion there is help for them if only they could find it. Is the Church supplying this help? Let me answer by quoting some words from a book widely read and appreciated at the present time. Speaking of a London burglar, the writer says:

“Never once—and in this all the prisoners I have ever talked to bear him out—never once did a prison chaplain visit his cell, make an appeal to his higher nature, or show that interest in his life, whether he swam or sank, which an expert like General Booth tells us is the very first step towards the reclamation of the outcast. I asked

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him his opinion of the Church services, and he said that they were regarded as opportunities for conversation, that the words of the prayers sounded like mockery, that singing hymns was pleasing and popular, that the sermons were unintelligible. In the interview which a prisoner is supposed to have with the chaplain before release, he was addressed always in the same words (others bear him out in this, too): 'Well, I suppose I shall see you back here in a month or two?' Once he turned round on the chaplain and said: 'Yes, and it won't be your fault if you don't see me back here all my life.' He was conscious that the chaplain ought to have been able to help him. A strange conviction in the mind of such a man."¹

It would seem that where organised Christianity fails to-day in its relation to the criminal is not that it is doing nothing, though that is probably true of some prisons, but rather that what it does is done in a haphazard, unscientific way. It lacks precision and definiteness of aim. It is wanting in a just and serious appreciation of the problem. Religion, we know, can do for the criminal what nothing else can, if only it is brought to bear upon him in the right way. Mean-

¹ Harold Begbie: *Twice Born Men*, p. 128.

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time, thousands of souls are allowed to sink down into darkness, lives are broken on the wheel of pain and misery, and society is suffering from a sore that festers and will not heal.

So far I have spoken of the Church's relation to those within the direct range of her influence. But what about the great mass that refuse the Church's ministry, while at the same time by no means hostile to the spiritual interests for which the Church stands? This is one of the saddest and most perplexing phenomena of our time. The Catholic Church is at deadly war with the whole body of socialistic reformers; yet among these latter are some of the most ardent and religious spirits of the century. The Protestant churches are quietly losing their hold upon great numbers of excellent people and then fall into the mistake of supposing that non-churchgoing necessarily means irreligion. As a matter of fact, there are thousands who believe in God and pray to Him,

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who cherish the hope of a future life, who honour the Lord Jesus, and yet are not at home in any of our Church organisations and find in various substitutes the inspiration of fellowship and worship. That the Church is suffering by the loss of so much valuable moral and spiritual strength, and that these who have broken with its traditions are suffering through their divorce from the spiritual resources of an historical communion, goes without saying. But what bridge can be built to span the chasm? It may be that the Church will be constrained to modify some of her methods so as to suit the needs of the new age, throwing into the background the things that offend, and emphasising more and more the things that attract. But the true solution of the difficulty will be found when the Church, inspired by the vision of the Eternal, once more receives a fresh baptism of power, and stands forth as the friend and helper of humanity, as the defender of the weak, the poor, and the op-

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pressed, as the leader in the service of man, which is also the service of God. The spectacle of such a Church will fling its spell on every generous spirit. Men will press into its ranks with enthusiasm, and the Kingdom of God on earth will once more “suffer violence and the violent will take it by force.”

CHAPTER XI

THE NEW CONCEPTION OF MISSIONS

IF from one point of view Christianity is the absolute religion, nay, is religion in its purest essence, from another point of view it is one among many religions. Hence, we are concerned with the missionary problem. Why should we seek to substitute Christianity for the native religions of distant lands? What is our message, and what guarantee have we that it will find acceptance? Are there any grounds for encouraging the hope that the religion of humanity will yet be one, and that that one will be the religion of Christ?

Our fathers had a short and easy way of explaining the older religions. They said: "These faiths are false, inspired by the Enemy of souls, who by subtle artifice seeks to lead men astray, and, under one disguise

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and another, gain their service and worship." But now we can no longer say so. The doctrine of evolution has here, as elsewhere, revolutionised our ideas. We now see that not only this or that religion develops, but that religion itself has grown, has passed through various well-marked stages towards the highest and fairest forms. All religions, from the lowest Animism or spirit worship, up to the loftiest ethical theism, are genetically related. We may say that without the earlier stages the later could not be. Viewed from the outside, the religious history of man stretches like a trackless jungle of false sanctities and consecrated falsities, of superstitious credulities and grotesque imaginings; viewed from within, it has been the history of a spirit bewildered amid the mysteries of the universe, yet possessed with an imperious craving to seek after God, if haply He might be found. Even in its most depraved form religion has meant good to man, has helped him to bear the sorrows of life,

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and to face the last agony of death. Bad and miserable as this world has been, with its multitudinous creeds, what kind of a world had it been without faith or the aspirations and inspirations that faith creates? If the Christian religion, then, is, as we believe it is, the answer to the age-long quest of humanity, those who have heard its message are debtors to the peoples still without it. This is the deepest, as it is the most human ground, on which the cause of missions rests. Christianity is pledged by its very nature to missionary enterprise. The truths it proclaims, the consolations and the hopes it offers are not meant for this or that people only; they answer permanent and universal needs of the race.

It is here that we are met with an objection which has made the ideal of missions seem like a Utopian dream in the eyes of some. There are lines of cleavage, we are told, running through the human race, revealed in speech and in some of the bodily or-

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gans and in the various forms of social institution. How absurdly quixotic to claim to overleap all these barriers and to impose on the Mongol, the South Sea Islander, the Hindu, the negro, and other equally diverse races, the religious ideas of the Englishman or the American! Is not the missionary enterprise a misguided, however well-motivated, attempt to thwart the manifest designs of nature? Unfortunately for this contention, however, modern investigation is more and more establishing the underlying unity of the race. This unity is one of nature, not necessarily of origin. Unity of origin is a question for the scientific anthropologist. Unity of nature can be discerned by the historian and the psychologist. Whether we assume that the race has descended from a single pair, a theory accepted by many distinguished scientists, like Darwin, Huxley, and Wallace, or that there were various centres from which man arose, the really important question is: Is there an element which is

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common to every man and which constitutes him a man? is the race a spiritual unity? We now know that peoples long supposed to be radically unlike are in reality wonderfully similar. It used to be said that the Semitic race, of which the Arab and the Jew are modern representatives, in contrast to the Indo-European, was inspired by an instinctive belief in one God. We now know that the Semites at a very early time believed in many gods. Nor do differences in language argue differences in racial stock. What two languages are more unlike than Hindustani and English? Yet many ages past the fathers of Hindu India and the fathers of modern England were brothers, lived under the same heavens, cultivated the same soil, and worshipped the same deities. And students of primitive man tell us that New Zealanders are weaving mats to-day in the same patterns as are found in the fragments which have been discovered on the sites of the ancient Lake-Dwellers of Switzerland. Man,

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then, is spiritually one. Why should not his religion be one, under whatever varieties of form? Moreover, what is this American Christianity which, as the objection contends, the Eastern peoples are unable to assimilate? It is not American at all, but comes from Judæa. Rising in the East, it has conquered the West, and now would re-enter and possess a larger East.

There are some, indeed, who think that Christianity is an excellent gift for savages, as a means of raising them out of their delusions, but that to seek to impose it on the cultivated minds of the Orient is a trifle ridiculous and even impertinent. This is an argument which influences even members of the Christian Church. The Oriental peoples have their sacred books and religions suited to their national characteristics: why constrain them to accept a foreign faith that has no roots in their national past? There is a twofold answer: one from the non-Christian and the other from the

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Christian standpoint. Said a distinguished American citizen recently to an equally distinguished subject of the Mikado: "Why do you allow these missionaries to enter Japan and keep the people stirred up? You have your own religions, ancient and venerable; why is it necessary to make the people restless with a new religion?" The true spirit of modern Japan was revealed in the answer: "We have opened the ports of our country to all that is best in civilisation, to the markets of other countries, to their literature, and to the armaments of war. If there is any best in religion, why should we close our ports to it when they are open to everything else the world has to give us? And if the Christian religion is the best, why should not the people of Japan have the advantage of it?" From the Christian standpoint the answer cuts more deeply. If the Gospel is not a message for all men, it is a message for no man. If the Buddhist priest, the Brahmanical pundit, the Japanese scholar,

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cannot receive the Christian Gospel, then its claims are at an end; for it professes to speak to man as man, to the larger humanity in which all men share. In its essence it is a spiritual light thrown upon heart and conscience, revealing to man the divine side of his nature, his kinship with the Eternal; in a word, it is the grandest manifestation of the Light that lighteth every man. This Word of God is meant for all His children, and when they hear His voice they will obey.

But concrete proof is better than abstract argument. We are witnessing to-day the amazing spectacle of a nation in search of a religion. In Japan, Shintoism, the ancient faith, is little more than a State ceremonial. No educated man regards it with any other feeling than that of formal respect, as an ancient national institution. It is felt to belong to a primitive mode of thought. Buddhism, the religion which appeals to the cultivated Japanese, has fallen into decay, and

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its educated adherents are beginning to realise that if it is to be saved it must be through contact with the Christian spirit. Here are some remarkable words written by the Professor of the Philosophy of Religion in the Imperial University of Japan. "We Buddhists are ready to accept Christianity. Nay, more, our faith in Buddha is faith in Christ. The one has come to us in order to release us from the fetters of passion and avarice and to convince us of an ideal higher than any worldly good. His Gospel was that of resignation attainable by meditation, yet never leaving one to the dreamy quietism of a pantheistic or nihilistic philosophy, but purifying human activity by calm enlightenment, and pushing one to the love of all things by faith in an incarnate Dharma. The other appeared in flesh as Son of Man, to redeem us from sin, to recover us to the love of our Father, from a covetous attachment to our own egotism. His Gospel was that of love and hope, but never of fury and

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vanity. He preached no wisdom, but the wisdom of His believers is holy and leading to the Father, purified by faith and strengthened by hope.”¹ We are justified in saying, then, that in the world up to date there are only two religions possible to cultivated men—Christianity and Buddhism. Which of these is best fitted to be the world religion? The answer must be,—That one which best assimilates whatever is good in its rival. Christianity, we say, is the perfect religion. But an element in its very perfection is its capacity to enter into alliance with all that is good and truly human, from whatever source it may come. Christianity will win the world just in proportion as it refuses to stand over against all other religions, in proud exclusiveness, but rather sympathises with every pure utterance of the human spirit and claims it as its own.

Japan is the strategic point in modern missionary endeavour. To win her is to win

¹ M. Anesaki: *Hibbert Journal*, October, 1905, p. 10.

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throughout the Orient. At the present moment the Christians of Japan are a mere handful—120,000—in a population of 47,000,000. Yet most thoughtful observers are agreed that this is the leaven that will leaven the whole lump. For it is in closest contact with the new Japan that is emerging out of the ruins of the old, the new Japan whose great ambition it is to be one of the first-class Powers of the world. Now, the nominal religion of all the first-class Powers is Christianity. This religion creates the psychological atmosphere that is the medium through which these nations can understand each other, and can to some extent divine each other's action. Apart from deeper convictions, Japan will find it an advantage to adopt Christianity as a means of moral communication with the other great Powers, though at the same time she may retain her primitive rites, on account of their national associations and their sentimental attraction. Even so, the Christian may well re-

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joice. The seeds of Christ's idealism, though sown in a soil of secular utilitarianism, will rise to vital power and commanding energy in many a susceptible soul. With a Christianised Japan as the great missionary centre of the East, the world is on the way to a universal faith. Meantime, the task laid on the Christian Church in Japan is clear. It is to create a theistic consciousness in the native mind, a belief in a living God worthy of the soul's highest homage, and in the soul by right immortal. Out of this theism will spring a higher ethic than that on which Japan has founded her national life. A young man, born of mingled American and Japanese strain, aware of the traditions of both great nations, from which he took his descent, said to a leading American who had spoken in praise of Bushido: "Bushido? I know you admire it in the West, but you do not seem to understand that there is nothing in Bushido which makes it necessary that a man should be truthful to men or true to a

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woman.”¹ The Japanese are a shrewd and far-sighted people. They will not rest content with a doctrine of despair, with an enlightenment that leads to eternal unconsciousness as the highest goal of humanity. Nor will they stake their national fortunes on a morality which has nothing to say to the deepest and most sacred issues of the personal life.

The cause of missions has entered on a new era in our time. The missionary spirit of to-day is distinguished from that of an earlier age by its wider sympathies, its deeper human note, its mightier ambitions, its nearer approximation to the thought and purpose of Christ. The most signal manifestation of the new spirit is to be seen in the Laymen's Missionary Movement, a movement without a parallel in the history of the Church. One fact alone speaks eloquently of the forces at work in this outburst of Christian devotion. Throughout the United

¹ Talcott Williams: *Men and Missions*, pp. 9, 10.

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States, during the winter of 1909-1910, in all the leading towns, seventy-five major and minor conventions, limited to men, have been held, under the guidance, not of clergymen, but of leading business and professional men. These conventions culminated in the great National Congress of Missions held in Chicago. No less than sixty-five thousand, representing the brain and moral backbone of the country, attended these meetings and took a breathless interest in the problems under discussion. For the first time in the history of missions, great numbers of wise and thoughtful men are consecrating to the problem of world-evangelisation a share of the restless energy, the constructive skill, the statesmanlike grasp of intellect, which they have devoted to the great commercial enterprises that have made America one of the first nations of the earth. This movement we owe to the spiritual intuition of a young business man, who was inspired by the vision of three thousand students assembled

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to discuss and pray about the work of missions.

But this movement is greater and springs out of causes deeper than even some of its leaders suspect. For one thing, it expresses the growing sympathy of our age, the sense of brotherhood that assumes obligations in the spirit of love. We no longer seek to make converts in a sectarian spirit, as though we had a monopoly of truth and faith. Rather would we find Christ everywhere. We welcome every noble line in the Vedas or the Avesta, and catch echoes of Christian thought in the laws of Confucius and in the doctrines of Buddha. The Christian conviction to-day is that God has not left Himself anywhere without a witness, and that men who have struggled to find God, and in a measure have found Him, have a right to rejoice in His supreme revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ. Our fathers believed that countless myriads of heathen were perishing for lack of the Gospel; and this terrible

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thought wrought deeds of sacrifice worthy of the age of martyrs and apostles. But nobody can accept this motive to-day. A nobler theology has undermined it and has substituted for it a diviner incentive—personal devotion to the Lord Jesus, profound belief that the future of humanity is bound up with the fate of the Gospel. Thoughtful men are becoming more and more convinced that it is religion which alone can support the abounding energies of modern civilisation, and that the more complicated the civilisation the more optimistic and the truer to reality must be the religion. Now, there is only one religion which rests on optimism, on a belief in the omnipotence of goodness. It is the religion of Christ. Only this religion encourages action and enterprise, builds up a healthy social order, and holds out some worthy hope for the future. “Why is it,” says a Japanese writer, “that heathen in general go into decay so soon, but Christians in general know no decay whatever, but hope even in death

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itself. . . . I attribute the progressiveness of Christendom to its Christianity. Faith, Hope, and Charity, the three life-angels that defy and shun Death and his angels have worked upon it for the past nineteen hundred years, and have made it as we have it now.

. . . Enormous yet though their sins are, these people have the power to overcome them. They have yet no sorrows which they think they cannot heal. Is not Christianity worth having if but for this power alone? ”¹

And to the objection, Why send missionaries to heathen when there are so many heathen at home? the same writer replies: “ This world is a unit, and the human race is one great family. An idea of a perfect Christendom in the midst of encircling heathenism is impossible. In Christianising other peoples you Christianise yourself.”²

Finally, the new missionary enthusiasm differs from the old in that it is character-

¹ Kanzō Uchimura: *Diary of a Japanese Convert*, pp. 200, 201.

² *Ibid.*, p. 203.

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ised by a mightier ambition. The older aimed at plucking here and there a few souls, like brands from the burning; the newer speaks not of individuals, but of nations. Its purpose is not to turn Chinese or Hindus or Japanese into American or English Christians, not to impose our Western Christianity upon the Oriental mind, but rather to form Christ in the national consciousness, that He may there take on a new form and reveal Himself in unsuspected proportions. We may well believe that there are aspects of Christ's person and work which the Western genius has been unable to appreciate. Christ, according to the flesh, was an Oriental. In returning to His world, may it not be that even the Christian world of the West will catch a new vision of Him, will see Him freed from the trammels and swaddling-clothes of an artificial and Latinised theology? The heart of the Christian may well feel a thrill of joy when he thinks of the wonderful triumphs which may in our own

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day bring fresh honour to that Name “ which is above every name; that in the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.”¹

¹ Philippians ii, 9-11 (Am. R. V.).

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